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BEYOND THE GRAVE

BY

DR. HERMANN CREMER

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GREIFSWALD

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE title of the little book herewith presented to the public in an English translation is in the original as follows: "*Concerning the State after Death; together with some Intimations Concerning the Death of Children, and Concerning Spiritualism.*" This inconvenient title has been exchanged for a more attractive and equally descriptive one, given by the Author to a previous work, as noticed in his Preface which follows. The latter not having appeared in an English translation, there is not the same need of employing a new title for the present book.

Though this little book was published in Germany (*Gütersloh, C. Bertelsmann*) in

1883, the Translator only became acquainted with it in February of the present year. To read it was to have immediately the desire to prepare a translation of it for English readers, and a request was communicated to the Author for his permission to do so. Meanwhile, assuming that there would be no difficulty, especially that the request had not been anticipated in any quarter, the translation was undertaken and finished in a few weeks, and before receiving the Author's reply.

The letter to Dr. Cremer found him, alas! at the death-bed of his second son, a young man of eighteen years. Thus he was actually needing, and doubtless experiencing also, the virtue of those consolations of the God of all comfort, wherewith, in this little book, he had been richly comforting in God others that had like trouble.

In the reply thus delayed, Dr. Cremer expressed his appreciation of the estimate put on his little book, adding that it had already enjoyed an exceedingly friendly re-

ception in foreign lands, of which he had convincing proof in the appearance of a Swedish translation. Respecting the request for permission to translate it into English, he replied that "some months ago he had received a letter from the Rev. Geo. Z. Gray, D.D., Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., requesting him to give his approval of a translation into English, which he had accordingly given. Thus he was not in position to give approval to another translation. Otherwise it would have given him pleasure to do so."

Having received this reply, the Translator immediately communicated by letter with Dr. Gray, stating the situation, who, in his courteous reply, said, "I feel unwilling to stand in the way, as you have done so much of the work, or to insist on my prior right. Therefore I will withdraw."

It is a pleasure to acknowledge this courtesy, and the gratification the Translator has enjoyed in executing the work

thus resigned makes him appreciate Dr. Gray's withdrawal as an act of great generosity. Gratefully accepting this courtesy, he desires also to express his obligation to the publishers for producing the work in so attractive a form.

The Translator takes pleasure in acknowledging his indebtedness for the favor conferred by the Rev. A. A. Hodge, D.D., Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary, in writing, at his request, an Introduction to the present work. The expediency and propriety of this Introduction will vindicate themselves. It is not improper, however, to remark, that the Translator shares the views of the Author (page 41) that are criticised in the Introduction. The criticism, on the other hand, is most welcome. It will cause the matter in question to be the more carefully scrutinized, and, like the light of the torch, which "the more it's shook it shines," so it will be with the truth in this matter, whatever it is.

Much that might have been proper for this Preface appears in the Introduction; it is only necessary, therefore, to add the following notice to the reader:

The original of this book is divided into only three sections, which may be detected on pages 12, 52, and 81; on which follow the two supplements, "The Death of Little Children," page 119, and "Concerning Spiritualism," page 131. The present form, as broken into small chapters, with the headings attached, is the Translator's work. This device, like the translation itself, seemed essential to an English literary form; for English readers are as likely to revolt at a succession of unbroken pages, as much as at the long-extended sentences that seem quite acceptable to German readers.

SAMUEL T. LOWRIE,

EWING MANSE, near Trenton, N. J.,
October, 1885.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

FOR a number of years the publisher of my little book, entitled "Beyond the Grave" (*Jenseits des Grabes*), which appeared in 1868, has wished me to prepare a new elaboration of it. It is only now that I have found it possible to do so. In my lecture (Barmen, 1870) on "The Resurrection of the Dead," I have not only treated especially the subject of the hope of resurrection, but also brought together nearly all the intimations, hints, and sayings of Holy Scripture concerning the state after death, and attempted to answer the questions thereby suggested in connection with what we know of faith and salvation. In view of these changes I have chosen a

somewhat modified title.* The present title may, at the same time, with respect to the friendly offering of the Danish physician and professor, Dr. Hornemann ("Concerning the Condition of Man shortly before Death"), serve as an admonition not to forget what is after death, so far as we can know about it.

GREIFSWALD, *August*, 1883.

[* The Author entitles his present production "The State after Death." We have preferred for its English form the title of his original production.—TR.]

INTRODUCTION.

THE Author of this book, Dr. H. Cremer, is one of the very foremost of the decidedly evangelical scholars of Germany. He is Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the University of Greifswald, in Northern Prussia; he is associated with such well-known men as Luthardt, of Leipsic, Strack, of Berlin, Volck and Harnack, of Dorpat, Von Scheele, of Upsala, in the authorship of Zöckler's "Manual of Theological Science." The work by which he is best known is his very learned and valuable "Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament," which is now proceeding to its fourth edition. He stands very high in the estimation of English and American scholars for learning, judgment, and evangelical spirit.

The doctrine of this little book, with one exception clearly noted by the Translator, is perfectly in accord with the straitest

standards of orthodoxy, and yet we believe that its contents will be found fresh and interesting to all intelligent readers. To be fresh and instructive within the realm of revealed truth, it is not necessary, as it is not permitted, to present matter absolutely original. It is sufficient that the matter of revelation, as old as the Bible itself, should be presented in some new measure of accuracy, fulness, and power. The special advantage of the present treatise results from the acknowledged learning, judicial balance and candor of its eminent Author, and from the purely biblical non-speculative character of his method. The special studies of Dr. Cremer, which have rendered him in his department an authority recognized throughout the Christian world, qualify him for presenting an accurate statement of the real biblical teaching on this subject in the light of the most profound and comprehensive modern scholarship. This will be found to be highly reassuring, in view of the unsettling character of much of the pretentious learning and speculation of the present time.

The method of this treatise is rather that of biblical than of systematic theology. Systematic theology sums up, in a system of general conceptions and definitions, all that the Scriptures teach on every point upon which it declares the mind of God. It is concerned rather with the substance of the truth than with the words used by the Holy Ghost to express it, or with the forms in which in different periods and by different writers it has been presented in the Scriptures. Biblical theology, on the other hand, notes more closely all the phenomena of revelation, the gradual unfolding of every truth through successive dispensations, the characteristic terms in which it has been expressed in different ages and by different writers, and the various points of view in which it has been conceived and exhibited by different writers under different historical conditions. Each of these distinct methods possesses its own special advantage; but the method of biblical theology is comparatively very unfamiliar to religious people. In spite of the fact that the Bible is held by us to be the very

WORD OF GOD, the source of all our knowledge of divine things, and of the fact that a great deal of desultory study has always been devoted to the sacred text by Protestants, the generalized conceptions and definitions and technical terms of systematic theology have to a great degree taken the place, in the minds of most modern Christians, of the purely biblical language and form in which these truths have been severally set forth by the Holy Ghost in his own word. This tendency, natural and universal, has been intensified by the use of Confessions and Catechisms. For instance, among English-speaking Presbyterians it has been increased by the universal diffusion and long dominance of that most admirable of all statements of systematic theology embraced in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Take, for example, the subject of this book. The Scriptures certainly teach two related truths: (1) That human probation ends with death, and that the state into which the soul enters immediately after death is, in its essential character, to remain

unchanged forever. (2) That as a final result there are but two states—one of holiness and happiness, or one of sinfulness and misery—into which all the members of the human family are to be distributed. These are styled respectively Heaven and Hell, and are represented in Scripture, and necessarily conceived of by us, as being two distinct places as well as states. And the Westminster Confession follows Scripture faithfully in denying that there is any middle place or condition (*e.g.*, purgatory) occupied by the disembodied spirits of men between death and the resurrection (ch. 32, § 1).

From this basis of unquestionable fact many draw the inference that these terms Heaven and Hell must always have had the same values in the usage of all parts of Scripture, and that the realities signified by these terms respectively must always, through all dispensations, have remained unchanged. That is, that the seat of bliss to which the Old Testament believer went immediately after death must always have been known as heaven, and must have been

identical with that state and condition into which the New Testament believer departs when he dies; and that the heavens of the Old Testament believer, before the first coming of Christ, and that of the New Testament believer, during the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, and that of all the redeemed after the final judgment, are all identical in respect to locality and condition.

All this involves a confusion of the different stages in which believers realize redemption here and hereafter, with its consummation. The true state of facts as to the manner in which these matters are set forth in Scripture is as follows:

I. The consummation of our redemption cannot occur until the resurrection and glorification of our bodies. The human person, subject at once of law and of redemption, essentially consists of soul and body. The body is necessary to the completion of the personality, and consequently to the full enduring of the penalty, or the complete experience of salvation. These identical bodies which have sinned and suffered

here, modified but not exchanged, must be brought up out of the dominion of death, and the entire person reinstated as a child of God. Hence Paul says (Rom. viii. 23) that even we Christians who have already the first-fruits of the Spirit, nevertheless "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." And hence the Holy Spirit, who now dwells in all believers, "seals them" not unto the heaven that comes immediately after death, but "unto the day of redemption," *i. e.*, that day in which redemption shall be consummated in the resurrection and glorification of their bodies.

The hope of the Messiah included the hope of the resurrection of the body, as Paul teaches (Acts xxiv. 14, 15; xxvi. 6). The earthly work of the Messiah culminated in his own resurrection. The preaching of the gospel was the proclamation of the bodily resurrection of Christ, and hence of all his people. The work of redemption itself was completed in the resurrection of Christ himself, and the realized redemption of his people is completed in the actual

resurrection of their own bodies. In the mean time the hope of the gospel is the hope of resurrection (Acts xxiii. 6). To this extent the new departure in theology, which denies the actual resurrection of the bodies of believers, is proved to be unbiblical. And to this degree is the prevalent religious faith of the day, which lays all its emphasis upon the salvation of the soul completed immediately after death, shown to be defective.

The Author has done us a great service in setting the resurrection of our bodies before us in the same prominent position which it occupies in the WORD OF GOD. The highest blessedness set before us in the gospel will not be attained until after the general resurrection. If this be so, it follows, that while Christians should contemplate what awaits them immediately after death with confidence and joy, since to be "absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord," they should nevertheless follow the apostolic example in lifting up their longing desires in anticipation of that completed redemption which

can only follow those events which shall accompany and succeed the Second Coming of our Lord. The whole Church, as she waits either on earth or in heaven, finds the expression of her highest aspiration in the closing words of Scripture, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Only then shall we "be satisfied, when we awake in his likeness."

It follows, also, that there is an *Intermediate State*, in which the condition of believing souls will be very different from anything they have experienced in this world, or will experience in their state of final glorification. The human soul is essentially constituted for personal union with a material body. This union conditions all its sensibilities and all its activities. While "absent from the body," the spirit will be conscious, holy, happy, and "at home with the Lord." Nevertheless, this ghost life is unnatural, incomplete, temporary, and a consequence of sin. As long as it lasts, believers, though in heaven, still continue as Christ was "till the third day," in part, "under the power of death."

Whether there is an intermediate place, as well as an intermediate state, no living man knows. Location in space in such connection lies beyond all profitable thought. All we are told is that the believer, as soon as he dies, is "at home with Christ." That surely is enough. This is what the Westminster Confession calls (Larg. Cat., Ques. 86) "the highest heavens." But whether the seats of bliss remain in the same place, absolutely or relatively to other portions of the physical universe, is not revealed. The indications of Scripture are all the other way. If the persons of Christ and his people are eternally united to material bodies, heaven must be a part of the material universe, in which the physical conditions will be adjusted to the sensibilities and activities of the glorified bodies they environ. The testimony of Scripture seems to be, that as the body of the saint is to be modified in the process of glorification, so the glorified home is to be constituted by the modification of the heavens and earth that are now. For we are "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of

God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 12, 13).

II. In a similar manner modern Christians have generally supposed that the Scriptures taught that Old Testament believers, immediately after death, were transformed into the same state, and admitted to the same place and relations that believers are admitted to since the death and resurrection of their Lord. The actual facts of the biblical teaching on this subject are as follows:

The word HEAVEN, which occurs very frequently, is never used in the Old Testament to designate the place or the condition to which believers are introduced at death.* It is never used as if the subject designated sustained any relation to man's future destiny. It always designates the

* With the single exception of Elijah (2 Kings ii. 1, 11), who was, like Enoch, translated, and so delivered from death, the common experience of redeemed men.

dwelling-place of God. Heaven is his throne, while the earth is his footstool (Isa. lxvi. 1). He is always represented as reigning, looking, hearing, answering, acting, coming "from heaven." But all men, good and bad, are said to go immediately to SHEOL when they die (Dr. Hodge's "Systematic Theology," pt. iv., ch. i., § 4).

This word "Sheol" occurs sixty-five times in the Old Testament, and, with two or three exceptions, is represented by the equivalent term HADES in the Septuagint Greek. This word "Hades"* occurs also eleven times in the New Testament, and throughout its usage in both Testaments maintains a perfectly plain and uniform sense. Sheol or Hades is the term used in the ancient dispensation by the Holy Spirit in the sense of the spirit-world, the invisible world, the land of shades, the under-world, into which the disembodied spirits of all men go immediately after death. It is a part of the

* See the very thorough, learned, and able "Excursus on Hades," by Dr. Elijah R. Craven, pp. 364–377 of the volume on Revelation, of the "Lange-Schaff Critical and Doctrinal Commentary."

realm of death, and residence in it is a consequence of sin. Irrespective of the atonement of Christ, its condition would be purely penal and hopeless. To the Christless it was the vestibule of hell. But in view of his atonement and to all believers Hades was the vestibule of heaven, for he was "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8). Hence there were in Hades separate regions and conditions of disembodied spirits. A place for the good, called Abraham's bosom, or Paradise, and a place for the evil, Gehenna, or "Hell," in the modern definite and exclusive sense of that word. And between these two places and conditions there was "a great gulf fixed," and no possible interchange, or even passage of persons from the one to the other (Luke xvi. 19–31). In the one condition they were comforted, in the other they were "in anguish."

The faith and hope of the Old Testament believer rested on the coming of the Messiah. When he came he "should redeem Israel." Abraham rejoiced to see his day,

and "he saw it and was glad." As the time advanced, and the work of preparation for the Messiah drew towards completion, the hope of the resurrection of the body and of the glorification of the entire person became more definite and certain. But in the mean time Hades always was regarded as a place of gloom and imperfect shade-life, and death was submitted to by the Old Testament believer with reluctance. The deliverance they longed for was in the further future, and *from* Hades, not *in* it. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 9–11; xlix. 15). It involves no denial of the Messianic character of this psalm to affirm the obvious fact that in the first instance it expresses David's personal hope, which he shared in common with all believers of his age.

The question necessarily arises, whether

these gloomy, shadowy views as to the condition of believers in the spirit-world, waiting for the coming of the Messiah, are due to the imperfect revelation vouchsafed to living believers in Old Testament times, or to the actual condition of believing souls in Hades as then constituted. Dr. Cremer insists upon the latter view exclusively; he holds that "the difference between the Old and the New Testament prospect of existence beyond the grave is not to be referred to an imperfect knowledge of the former concerning the life after death, but to the difference between the periods." He founds this judgment upon the principle that the Old Testament believers could not have been actually redeemed before the redemption-price had been actually paid by Christ on earth. For "until there should come about a rightful redemption by means of a valid sacrifice, death, the wages of sin, reigned, and with it Hades, the continuation of death, even over those who looked for redemption" (page 41).

The writer of this Introduction believes that Dr. Cremer, as most other German

scholars of Lutheran antecedents, greatly exaggerates a difference which really existed between the conditions of Old and of New Testament saints immediately after death, and that the ground upon which he rests this difference in the sentence above quoted is wholly unbiblical. The imperfect revelation, as compared with that of the New Testament, which the Old Testament saints enjoyed, will by itself explain much of the indistinctness and gloom which characterized their apprehensions of death and of the world immediately beyond. It is, on the other hand, certainly taught in Scripture that the then future atoning work of Christ, decreed and certainly foreknown, was made the meritorious basis of God's treatment of believers in Old Testament times, in this life and after death, just as really and as directly as in the case of any Christian since the advent. This in no degree depended upon the clearness of their knowledge or the brightness of their hope. The unconscious infant, the ignorant convert, the fearful doubter, the illuminated seer, the heroic martyr, all partake of the

same redemption and go to the same heaven. David rested on the atonement and was a beneficiary of its expiating virtue, however little he may have understood its nature. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The entire Mosaic ritual was a symbolic expression of the fact and method of salvation through the coming Saviour. In these rites Christ was not only set forth, but also really apprehended and enjoyed. They, as well as we, were forgiven all their iniquities, their lives also were redeemed from destruction, and they were crowned with multitudes of loving-kindnesses and of tender mercies. They also were "saints," "holy men," and therefore they were regenerated and sanctified as well as justified. The identity of their religious life with ours is conspicuously demonstrated by the fact that the "Psalms of David" have for two thousand years expressed all the phases of the experience of Christians of all nationalities and of all ecclesiastical parties.

It is in vain to say that God was in "Heaven" and not in "Hades." In his essence God is absolutely omnipresent. Even on earth Old Testament believers "walked with God," and found him "a very present help in trouble," and accepted him as their "portion forever." Even here God dwelt in his holy temple, and was visibly manifested in the "shekinah." It is simply incredible that the changes which believers underwent at and after death were of a *retrograde* order. These changes must have been, as are those experienced by a New Testament believer at his death, an advanced stage, though only a stage, in the progress of redemption applied and realized. Whatever may have been the unrevealed details of their condition, it is certain that they continued to be embraced in the covenant of redemption, and to be going on to experience ever more and more thoroughly the benefits thereby secured.

On the other hand, it is plain that in the actual, personal realization of salvation through Christ, and all that it involves in its fulness, believers in "Abraham's bosom"

must have come short in much of the measure of blessedness realized by Christians in what we call the intermediate state. It never could have been said by David or by Isaiah, "I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better," for "we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and *to be at home with the Lord*." To us the full and satisfying conception of heaven is to be with Christ, the incarnate God. To the Old Testament believer after death this doubtless was a confident hope, but it could not have been an actual fact, before Christ was born and died. The entrance of Christ into the abodes of the blessed dead must have revolutionized them. Indeed it is a significant fact that these abodes of the blessed dead, whatever may have been their locality, were never called "heaven" in the language of inspiration until after this great crisis wrought in the spirit-world by the entrance of the God-man. Christians on earth count the ages of their terrestrial history from the date of their Lord's advent in the flesh; and just

so, on the other side, glorified souls in the spirit-world count the ages of heaven from the date of their Lord's advent into their sphere immediately after his crucifixion.

This event is expressed, agreeably to the language of the Old Testament, in the great historic creeds of Christendom as Christ's descent *in inferna*, or *ad inferos*, or εἰς τὸν ᾅδην, *i. e.*, his descent into Hades. The English word Hell, by which Hades is represented in the ordinary versions of the Creed, translated that term accurately when first used, but has now come to be used exclusively in the restricted sense of Gehenna, the place of the damned. But the phrase in question, in its true historic sense, expresses a plain and important truth. "Hades" is the Old Testament designation of the spirit-world, to which all men went at death, the good being separated from the lost by an impassable gulf, in a region corresponding to their redeemed and spiritually elevated condition. Yet during the residence of their souls in Hades, separate from their bodies, even believers remain partially under the power of death. The disembodied

state is so far a consequence of sin and a condition of incompletely realized redemption. Now Christ must needs "taste death" to the dregs for us. His vicarious suffering includes the following stages: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate—was crucified—dead —buried—descended into *Hades*." So all his redeemed had gone before him. He went precisely where Abraham and all the true Israel were waiting for him, and in so going he changed the redeemed side of Hades from being, as hitherto, the vestibule of heaven, into heaven itself for Old and New Testament saints alike.*

* The present writer has preferred to speak as if the advent of Christ merely changed the *condition* rather than the *locality* of his waiting Old Testament saints. It is by no means intended to deny the opinion of many that Christ did change the locality and take his people *out of* Hades into another place called Heaven. The Scriptures always represent Heaven as high, and Hades as deep. "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Hades; what canst thou know" (Job xi. 8). It is certain that the Old Testament saints before the death of Christ waited in Hades. It is certain that Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, and that all his people who have departed this life are with him there.

Any local agitation looking to the expurgation of this true Scriptural phrase from the text of the Creed of universal Christendom is, in our belief, wrong in principle, evil in effect, and without a single argument of value in its favor. Such a movement implies a sad want of appreciation of the historical relations of the Church of Christ and of true orthodox doctrine. It implies a lamentable indifference to the actual and prospective union of Christendom, by threatening to mutilate, without ecumenical consent, one of the few historic bonds which the distracted denominations

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Nevertheless, it appears to the writer that terms indicative of relations in space, when applied in Scripture to the other world, are not to be pressed in a literal sense. "Up" and "down" in the language of the inhabitants of a revolving and rotating sphere must be metaphorical. They probably express ideas of brightness and hope, or depression and apprehension, as entertained by *persons occupying our earthly point of view.*

We mean neither to affirm nor to deny that Christ took his people *out of* one place to another. We affirm that whereas they had been in that part of Hades occupied by the blessed, they hereafter were in heaven. There was certainly a change for the better in their state, whether a change or not in their place.

of to-day inherit from their common mother, the undivided patristic Church. It implies, also, an entire misunderstanding as to the real meaning of the phrase in question, and an indifference to the important truth which it expresses.

As to the point in which the Translator has so justly and ably criticised the teaching of the learned Author, it is gratifying to observe that Dr. Cremer holds his opinion as to the possible admittance of souls, who have never had the gospel presented to them in this life, to an opportunity of embracing it during the Intermediate State, as "only a conjecture," founded on some obscure Scriptural indications. He makes it clear in the text that he regards this possible *post-mortem* probation to be of grace, not of debt, and to apply not at all to us who have the gospel offered to us here and now, but only to others to whom such problems never come in this life. It is therefore an opinion which can have no practical effect, and is a purely sentimental hope which we may, he thinks, innocently entertain in respect to others.

We admit that the conditions of salvation stated in the Scriptures limit us, but not God. We have no authority to set the limits to what God may do in the way of a larger grace, where he has not himself positively and plainly set his self-decreed limit down in his Word. Nevertheless our speculations and our sentimental hopes have no valid right beyond the express guarantees of his Word. In the transcendental region of possible, uncovenanted mercies, human thoughts and hopes are alike unwarranted and unprofitable.

But the ground upon which this claim of a *post-mortem* probation for those who have never had Christ offered to them in this world is now generally pressed by the advocates of the new theology, and condemned as heretical by the advocates of the old, is that it tacitly implies that, some way or other, God, in justice, owes to all men an offer of the gospel. If this be so, it necessarily follows that the gift of his Son to die, instead of being the consummate act of infinite grace, is a tardy and

incomplete act of justice. It is held that in the universal judgment men are to be tried, not on the basis of the conformity of their character or record to the demands of the law, but solely by the test of their relation to Christ. This, of course, is true if men through faith have become the recipients of an imputed righteousness. But if this be not so, they are to be tried and judged "according to the deeds done in the body." That the heathen to whom Christ is not known are morally responsible and hence are justly condemned to punishment, Paul both asserts and proves in Romans. If men be not justly condemned as worthy of God's wrath and punishment, antecedent to and irrespective of the death of Christ and the offer of salvation through him, then it necessarily follows that there was no necessity for Christ's death, and that he did not save men by expiating the guilt of their sins. The position that a *post-mortem* probation for the unevangelized is possible is unwarranted. The position that such a probation is necessary to render God just is logically inconsistent with the whole

scheme of Redemption as revealed in the Word.

Thanking the eminent Author for his great services to the Church of Christ, we pray that he may long be spared to continue and surpass them.

A. A. HODGE.

BEYOND THE GRAVE.

BEYOND THE GRAVE.

An ominous obscurity attaches to the idea of a world beyond the grave. This fascinates us, and to every ray of light that illumines, or promises to illumine, that obscurity we give a hearty welcome. What is obscure is not, whether in general there be really such a world beyond the grave. Many, indeed, persuade themselves that there is the difficulty. But the certainty of that future world, and the recognition of it, is intimately and indissolubly connected with the simplest foundations of moral and religious life. It is involved in the acknowledgment of God, and of that law of his truth inseparable from him. Such recognition is not, indeed, made necessary for us, like a result in arithmetic or of chemical analysis. In that respect we are free,

and may dispose of ourselves. We are free to acknowledge or not the eternal law that concerns us, and the tribunal, that is, the living God, before whom we shall be judged according to that law. We acknowledge or not at our peril, for we have our fate in our hand. Only when the final, valid decision concerning us, and how we have done our duty, shall be reached, will the acknowledgment of the truth be made necessary for us. But if we are free to dispose of ourselves, and are accountable for ourselves, then the first proper realization and assertion of our freedom should be the recognition of this freedom and accountability, the recognition of the eternal law that concerns us, the recognition of our Lord and Judge. If we deny this, then nothing is left to us but caprice, and in the end it is no matter whether we are free or not, or how we live, or what we get by living. Eventually we come under the iron law of necessity.

In this respect the Holy Scripture proceeds in a fashion truly sublime. It nowhere teaches particularly that there is ex-

istence beyond the grave, as it nowhere says, "There is a God." At most it only says, "Fools say there is no God." In the Scripture both are taken for granted, and it is assumed that only folly, wickedness, or pusillanimity could care to deny them. The whole law of Sinai, for instance, says nothing about *future* retribution; yet that law would be without significance if every word of it were not a rivet in the lock that unlocks eternity.

Accordingly, we find all over the world the conviction that there is a "beyond the grave," *a kingdom of the dead.* And the more seriously men have scrutinized and meditated on the aim and goal of their life, the more definite does this conviction appear. This is true not only of popular belief, but also of philosophy. The exception is where philosophy turns from investigation of eternal law and of the moral character of truth, and contents itself with reducing to a system the enjoyment of life, like Greek Epicureanism or Jewish Sadduceeism; or where spiritual capacity to apprehend truth is enfeebled and diminished,

and joins hands with aversion for the moral and religious foundations of life, as we may observe to be actually the case among ourselves at the present time.

It is significant, therefore, that at present philosophy is no longer so averse as formerly to this recognition of an existence beyond the grave, of a future, not for posterity only, but for the living. Only a few isolated representatives of pantheism and some of the medical profession prefer being a vanishing wave of the tossing sea of the world, to indulging the blessed feeling, that even the drop in the ocean may know that it is not forgotten. Thus, for example, David Strauss, dedicating his book on "The Life of Christ" to his deceased (!) brother, writes: "In moments when every hope of life was extinguished, thou hast never yielded to the temptation to deceive thyself by borrowing from the existence beyond the grave." Such self-glorification and self-sufficiency of man only appears like a withered tree to which vanity and despair lend the semblance of a sorry living figure in the landscape of a desert. It may

look like heroism, this renunciation of "borrowing from future existence;" but *there is greater heroism in recognizing existence beyond the grave than in denying it.* For one may not only borrow from it, but the situation is found to be rather that there one must pay debts that are beyond his ability. Recognizing a world hereafter requires us to go to meet a world that is not a continuation of, but in various respects is directly the opposite of the present world. In distinction from the present world it is the complete expression and impression of moral laws, of eternal justice.

Now that so-called scientific materialism is on its death-bed, it is left to practical materialism to deny a future existence and recognize exclusively a present existence. With the latter there is no use of further contention, since the denial can only be persisted in by denying the simplest moral truths. For let us not deceive ourselves; the moment we doubt that man must care for more than the present, and things this side of the grave, that instant we lose every lever for giving motion and effectiveness to

the present life, and our life revolves restlessly without an aim, in a spiral that death cuts short. Is the present time and the hither world the only reality, and all beside only dream and froth, and at best only the ideal of an egoistic phantast or of a phantastical egoism, then the standard of living is no longer immutable right and eternal duty, but merely mutable custom. Social life must then be founded on egoism, and every limitation of the "I" will only be for the sake of preventing the "I" from self-injury by inevitable collision with a "Thou." Not even humanity and human rights may be thought of in any true sense. For respect towards men and brethren is only a vexatious compulsion to the man whose sole vocation and need is to use and enjoy his life. In such a scheme of life there is no place for humility, the most blessed of all virtues. Nothing is of importance but the chief requisites of life, health and wealth. The dust of past generations is valuable only as it may manure beet-fields and promote the sugar industry. If mankind were even capable of giving up the belief, the spontaneous

and firm conviction of a future existence, then humanity would speedily degenerate into bestiality.

Such denial of a future existence can only be morally understood as the false reasoning of a mind that refuses to admit that the guilt of having neglected the thirst of the soul for truth and eternity is its own guilt. *No one was ever led to this denial against his will*, constrained, say, by the force of some argument; *but many, against their will, constrained by conscience, have found themselves compelled to recognize a future existence.*

Thus we may firmly maintain that it cannot and must not be obscure to us, whether there is an existence "beyond the grave." If there be a God to whom we are held for debt, a law to which we are accountable, sins of which we are guilty, then there is also a judgment that renders a recompense for life in the present. Beyond this life, over which close the graves, there lies a realm of truth and justice—for the present world is not that realm.

Thus already a part of the twilight van-

ishes in which future existence is usually veiled, so long as we neglect to make it a matter of earnest meditation. For it is surely a great thing to know that there lies beyond this life a realm of truth and of inflexible justice, fitted to satisfy the craving of our souls for essential truth, when they have grown weary of the vain show and change of transient things; these souls of ours, in which, according to the wonderfully deep and true saying of Solomon (Eccl. iii. 11), God has set eternity.

A DARK PROBLEM WHICH ONLY GOD'S WORD CAN SOLVE.

But this bright side of the future existence is turned to gloomy shade for us as soon as we remember that it is the nature of truth not only to eclipse and triumph over what is false and mere show, but also to reveal its real character as the *opposite* of the truth. Nothing is left us then but the expectation of a judgment that will be very little in our favor. For instead of seeking the truth and realizing the laws of justice, we elude their claims, and seek sat-

isfaction in show and evanescence. Such is, then, the great dilemma presented to us: a world of truth, an eternal world, that causes a thrill in every fibre of our life, and awakes the most ardent longing of man, who is made for such a world; and the prospect of being divested, by the influences of that world, of every covering of our inmost being, and of standing naked and bare, without right or power to partake of that eternal life.

We shall make no mistake if we point to this discord as the reason why the thought of a future existence has, on the one hand, the appearance of an obscurity as awful as it is ominous, and makes, on the other, the impression of a certain insecurity and uncertainty. But so much the more are we pressed to know what shall become of us. What then really awaits mankind beyond the grave? Eternal light and life, or—what is worse than nonentity—exclusion from the world of light, the light that Paul designates as the unapproachable dwelling of God (1 Tim. vi. 16)?

Only in the records of redemption will we

find the solution of this problem. There, in the Holy Scripture, this discord is clearly recognized and receives adequate treatment. Only there does eternal law and its claim on us find its expression in inviolable clearness and truth. Only there is the longing of men as much comprehended in love as their sinful being is set in undisguised seriousness and light. There we are characterized as the enemies of our own aspirations, and this contrast of our sins and our aspirations finds its explanation. In the archives of redemption, then, we find the fullest and truest solution of the question, What shall become of us? and therewith the confirmation of the saying and wish that Plato has handed down to us in his celebrated dialogue concerning the immortality of the soul. There Simmias the Theban, a disciple of Socrates, was unable to follow the philosophizing reasons for believing in the immortality of the soul, and consequently proposed first to trust to his own thorough meditation of the subject; as far as that should not lead to a trustworthy judgment, he would trust to

the most reliable human authority, and thereby, as in a boat, swim through life as well as he could, "unless one may perhaps make his pilgrimage more securely and without danger in a firmer vessel, that is, on a word of God."

Let us, for this purpose, contemplate the word and revelation of our God.

I.

A CLEAR WORD OF PROPHECY.

We are not put off with a meagre word of information; for though we have only intimations given us, they are unexpectedly rich, clear, and satisfying. The Scripture does not comprehend, in the simple contrast of heaven and hell, all that it has to say to us concerning existence beyond the grave, though *ultimately* all finds its conclusion in this contrast. But before this conclusion is accomplished there is still a history running on beyond the grave, if we may so call it. There is a realm of truth and of what passes not away, of light and of imperishable life, existing above this world. But it will be long before it is accessible to those departed out of this world, and longer still before it fills the world and the world shall be transformed into the kingdom of heaven. *Existence beyond the*

grave is no longer what it was, and it will some time no longer be what it now is. In treating of existence beyond the grave we must speak of a past, present, and future.

THE FUTURE EASTER MORNING.

It is the hope of the Church of God on earth that the good work begun by our Lord himself will eventually receive its crowning conclusion in the resurrection of the dead. It is an Easter morning for whose dawn the Church awaits; an Easter morning as it dawned there in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, on the grave of the Prince of Life, the Lion of Judah, who was dead and is alive again, and now has the keys of hell and death (Rev. i. 18; v. 5). A morning that shall not again decline to evening is to come over the cemetery of mankind. It will dawn on the whole circuit of the earth, the great grave of all generations, and especially on the graves of the children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ, the first-born brother (Rom. viii. 29; John xx. 17; Heb. ii. 10–12). That will be the last Easter kept on earth. Then will

the last enemy, death, be done away, and all will be new. Then no one will any more ask, as the disciples once asked of the Lord when he foretold his end, "What is it to rise from the dead?" (Mark ix. 9, 10.) Every one, even the lost, will have an experimental idea of this miracle of all miracles, of which even Plato had some presentiment. And thus all mocking shall be silenced such as was heard in Athens, Plato's city, when Paul preached to them the unknown God, and Jesus, whom this God raised from the dead. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked" (Acts xvii. 32). A second Easter, such is the hope of the Church of God—not a hope in the sense of the hopes and wishes or fancies that we love to exchange with one another, but, as the apostle Paul says, hope that makes not ashamed; and if we hope for what we do not see, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom. v. 5; viii. 25). It is a hope whose ultimate realization to the members of the new covenant is not in the least doubtful, because it is connected with him whom his Church calls

the first-begotten from the dead, the first-fruits of them that slept; and whose work would be devoid of its conclusion, and thus also of truth, if this hope were not fulfilled. This hope is a possession for which believers have already received real, indisputable earnest-money; a possession that is not only guaranteed to them by the words of the divine promise, but by the personal experience of the death-conquering powers of an indissoluble life. This hope is so inseparably bound up with the foundation of Christian faith, and with the incontestable facts of the inner life, that Paul once designates it simply as the task of Christian life "to attain to the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 11). It forms so necessary and inseparable a part of Christianity that he calls their error a deadly cancer: "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is passed already" (2 Tim. ii. 18). The persons referred to probably denied the future and real resurrection of the dead, and interpreted the whole matter figuratively. According to the opinion of the apostle, whoever

doubts the resurrection of the dead must doubt the entire Christian truth of salvation, together with the facts on which it is founded; in a word, the whole of Christianity. For so he reasons, in that he does not conclude, "if Christ be risen, then shall the dead rise," but emphasizes the remarkable negative contrary: "If the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised—your faith is vain" (1 Cor. xv. 13, 16 sq.).

REDEMPTION MORE THAN IMMORTALITY.

Christianity is the religion of redemption; but redemption without abrogation of death, without resurrection of the dead, were nonsense, a chimera, a nonentity. God's work of salvation and redemption, that cost the Father his only Son, would be merely an attempt to redeem that miserably miscarried short of its goal, and revealed not the omnipotence of love, but only its eventual impotence. Redemption is restoration of life *and of everything that belongs to life. With a mere immortality Christianity cannot be satisfied*, any more than a man can be satisfied with that notion.

Christianity demands and offers more than immortality; it demands and offers a whole, a complete, not a partial redemption. As it was said when Israel was led out of Egypt, "there shall not a hoof be left behind" (Exod. x. 26), so it is true in redemption, nothing shall be left in the power of death.

This, in fact, is the great difference between the Christian hope of the resurrection of the dead and what is commonly called immortality. The former has to do with redeeming and saving; death is, and remains, the enemy of life. But where, on the other hand, one is content with immortality, supposing he has found something wonderfully beautiful and fitting, his immortality has to do only with a half prolongation of life, and in the end death even becomes the redeemer of mankind. It is characterized as a friend, because it frees us from the mortal body and the sufferings of the present; as if there were no sufferings that outlast time, and no burning pains besides the distress and misery of the body! To Christianity death is, and

remains, a misery and an enemy; though Christianity knows very well what dying joy is, and makes it, and gives dying consolation to the full. Immortality has nothing in common with redemption; and the so-called better existence into which death, the king of terrors, is supposed to lead us, is still for him who expects it only a miserable makeshift after all, and a beggarly compensation for the agreeable things of the present life. Christianity does thoroughly earnest work with the reality, and does not seek to divest it of its coarseness by phrases, and fine words, and visionary ideas. It is a religion that will not deceive, and, above everything, will tolerate no self-deception, much less, then, foster it; therefore it cannot remove the sting of death by anything but a thorough and everlasting redemption. It openly declares the fact, which men are so ready to hide from themselves, that without redemption we must remain slaves to the fear of death all our lives; that we cannot at all bear the present life and its consequences, viz., death and what is connected with it. Not mer-

cilessly, but most mercifully it exposes to a race sunk in self-deceit, despair, or insensibility the whole extent of the injury, in order to heal it by virtue of a wondrous and blessed redemption. It destroys all illusions regarding both the power and the weakness of the enemy, because it knows the Prince of Life, over whom death hath no dominion (Rom. vi. 9), and who is triumphant. It looks deeper than the greatest poet, and hearkens to the sighing of the creature, and teaches us to wait and watch for the redemption of our body (Rom. viii. 19–23). While the superficial hope of the soul's immortality, in pointed contrast with materialism, really degrades the body to a prison of the soul, not even the most zealous materialism can ascribe greater significance to the body than the Holy Scripture does. Immortality of the soul would only be a half life, a half continuance of life, which, being incorporeal, would lack precisely that which, if lacking, would make it impossible for us either to receive or to possess and retain life. In the scriptural view, which agrees also with

the reality, the body made of dust is necessary in order to receive and possess life. This is true not merely for the children born afterwards, but also for the first created man. Without body, no life. Hence it is indispensable also there where it concerns rescuing life from destruction, where it concerns redemption. Redemption that did not include the body would not be redemption, but, at best, only a scant rescue of what is left to be saved. It would never give us that fulness of life and bliss of which we have at least a presage in the full vigor of bodily health, were not our corporeal part also included in the redemption. Only, as the Bible represents it, the body is not everything, as if all would be instantly lost when the body returns to dust. And all moral self-consciousness, both of the philosopher and of the simple and unblunted feeling, agrees in this with Holy Scripture. Indeed, just for this reason, there is for the unredeemed man also still an existence after death. But in his case there is something wanting; his is essentially, as yet, no blessed existence. It

is under the continued influence of his beginning, that is, of death, as the present life, even in its beginning, is under the influence of its end, that is, of death. Death has invaded life like a power—has quite subjected it and has become the centre of it. It is effective backward and forward, so that even birth is no longer merely the beginning of life, but also the beginning of dying, and thus a new birth is necessary in order to be able to begin the eternal life.

DEATH NOT A DEBT OF NATURE.

Thus it is clear how little the mere fact of the immortality of the soul can satisfy Christianity even in respect to human nature in general. But, in addition to this, there is the serious moral contemplation of death, and of its significance for men. To Christianity this is something totally different from a natural consequence of life; much less is it a necessity of nature that accomplishes the inevitable separation of body and soul. That body and soul are in no respect independent of each other is just the thing that is made manifest by the

fact of death. By his sinful self-determination the head of our race essentially severed both himself and us from the divine source of life. Sin is an attempt to live independently of God; an attempt that partly succeeded; whose only partial success, however, is both its curse and its bitterest punishment, and impels either to unrestrained persistence in and repetition of sin, or to the profoundest longing for compassionate help. Our soul leads a sinful and thus a forsaken life; it is a ruin whose material is imperishable, whose structure is rent asunder. Such a life we receive in the way of the flesh. Along with its life the body has also the severance of life from its divine source to transmit and bear, and therewith both sin and death. It has become the mortal body of the sinful flesh, the body of sin and of death. The body, as the vehicle and mediator of the life, is the first to feel that it is nothing but dust of dust, without sustained effusion of the divine life. It is the first to feel, and that most manifestly, the natural as well as the moral consequence, legal and judicial, of this sev-

crance, viz., death. Penetrated by divine, eternal breath of life, even the dust of the earth would, by the forces of eternity, be endowed with incorruption, and transfiguration would have taken the place whose gaping void is now filled by corruption. Now, however, it has even come about otherwise; and, as matters now stand, when the sinful self-glorification of men vanished with death, as a matter of course, *the soul also in its turn experiences what dying and destruction mean.* What body and soul experience we may distinguish as death and dying. Primarily, what death does to the soul is not merely to bear away the garment that covers it, the bed in which it dreamed of bliss; it does more than that. In death the soul is like the poor man who has too much to die, too little to live. Terrible condition, this suspense and quaking between life and death, this dying without end! As long as death has not opened a man's eyes to this situation, he may somehow deceive himself, and surrender himself to the illusion that his soul lacks nothing. We can elude all the impressions and crav-

ings of our souls as long as we are masters of our bodies, and can be busy with the labor or diversions of the world that surrounds us. But with death this possibility ends, and the impotence of the soul becomes manifest in endless languishing. Severed from God by alienation from God, it is also alienated from the life that is from God. Excluded from the glorious freedom and the unimpeachable independence of the divine life, in which man's divine sonship and divine image must assert itself, eternally powerless, restrained, and bound, the immortality of the soul is nothing better than death, an eternal struggle for existence, an eternal deprivation of satisfaction, a self-consumption without end under the opposition of a holy God to all ungodly and God-estranged being.

ETERNAL LIFE.

Immortality is for sinful, unredeemed man nothing else than eternal death; no ray of light illumines the night, but only shadow from the light. Without redemption immortality is least of all a consolation for us.

Annihilation were better. It is significant that the Scripture hardly ever speaks of immortality. Only once does it apply the word in respect to men, where Paul says of the resurrection of the body, "This mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54); and once again where it speaks of God the only Blessed One and Potentate, "who alone hath immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 16). The Scripture never speaks of the immortality of the soul. For, on the one hand, immortality is a much too lofty notion, and signifies an entire freedom from death, which appertains in no way to man, sinful both in body and soul. On the other hand, according to the common way of speaking, immortality is something too empty and meaningless, and signifies only that the soul does not, with the last breath of the weary breast, become the sport of the winds to be scattered abroad, does not become dust with the body as if left with it—all which profits us little.

We need something very different from such meaningless immortality that has nothing about it like the better condition that

men dream of. For, to mention the matter once more, if any one should believe (and it is the belief of many) that death is at least a benefit for many, so far as it frees them from the pains and sufferings of the body, from the afflictions and disappointments of the earth, let him reflect whether many would not, in the end, long to have back again the pains of the body that were once so intolerable, if only they might thus redeem themselves from the distress that deluges their souls, of which on earth they were unmindful. Before death can be a benefit to the sufferer, a life must be born in him that death cannot harm. The powers of the redemption must have become operative in him. Then, and not before, does the apostle's consolation apply, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward (Rom. viii. 18), that is, when that other saying is true: "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. iv. 16).

We have need, we said, of something very

different from such indefinite, meaningless, and yet again, alas, only too significant immortality. For every serious man, to whom God, righteousness, and judgment are still realities, and to whom, because of these realities, there are such things as an eternity and a future, there is a question that is much more definite and full of meaning, Is there an everlasting life? Is there a redemption from the death under which the entire man suffers? Along with mankind in general we have, indeed, become accustomed, if not to death exactly, still to the thought that body and soul must one time separate. And in the question concerning everlasting life we think primarily only about the salvation of our souls, of their bliss, unmindful of that which returns to dust. And yet, as we may learn from the bitterness that the death of the body occasions the soul, this separation is something unnatural, and we can sympathize with the apostle when he says, how much better it is not to be unclothed but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. v. 4). If the thought of a

resurrection from death is not of itself in our minds when inquiring after eternal life, still we crave with everlasting life a reparation for the suffering of death, an abrogation of all that death brings with it, a redemption from the bondage of death. And whoever seriously craves redemption will see a proof of how truly the religion of redemption divinely revealed compasses and satisfies the needs of mankind precisely in this, viz., that redemption reaches as far as sin and death; that is, the redemption of our bodies is included in the divine work of salvation and deliverance. In a word, there is a resurrection from death, a resurrection of the dead, a full and entire abrogation of death. For ultimately this is what is involved and meant, when in the body of this death we raise the question: Is there eternal life? And only when redemption includes also a resurrection from the dead, is it what it proposes to be and must be, a conquering of death. The saying of the apostle, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? Hell, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor.

xv. 54, 55), is only fulfilled when the redemption of our bodies has come about, and the dead have risen.

WHY WAS MENTION OF A RESURRECTION SO LONG DELAYED IN SCRIPTURE?

It is true that there was a promise of redemption given long before there was ever expressed the thought of a resurrection of the dead which that promise involved. But the promise did not open up a view into a "better existence beyond the grave," but into a still remote blessed period. What the promise taught men to hope for lay not immediately beyond the grave, by a great deal.

How was it beyond the grave when the promise of redemption was not yet fulfilled?

HADES.

Until the redemption was accomplished, we find in the Scripture *one place for all dead*, the realm of death. In the New Testament it is called by the same name by which the Greeks named the place of the dead—Hades; in the Old Testament it is

called Sheol. In our Lutheran [and also the English] translation both are rendered by the word Hell, and not altogether improperly; for Hades does not belong to heaven, but in a contrastive way, like heaven, forms a contrast to earth, and at the end of the ages finds its place in hell (Rev. xx. 14). Hades, Sheol, the realm of death, is found in immediate attendance on death; its location there is the *natural*, immediate consequence of death. Because of this relation between death and Hades it is said, *e. g.*, in the visions of the Revelation of John, "I saw, and behold, a pale horse; and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him" (Rev. vi. 8). In the realm of the dead, primarily and foremost by way of beginning, it becomes manifest what death is, viz., not merely the departure from earthly life, the separation of man from the world that surrounds him, and of the soul from the body, but separation and removal from God, the source of life, from God whose place of making revelation is the earth, and not Hades, whose abode is heaven and not Hades. Thus one

can understand Hezekiah's lament: "Now in the repose of my days I shall go to the gates of Sheol. No more shall I behold the Lord, the Lord in the land of the living (Isa. xxxviii. 10, 11); and also the lament of the Psalmist: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. cxv. 17). The Sons of Korah lament, "Free [*i. e.*, forsaken] among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand" (Ps. lxxxviii. 5). So gloomy is the prospect in the kingdom of the dead that Hezekiah, when his prayer to be saved from death was heard, said, "Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day" (Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19). Job has the impression of a condition eternally lost when viewing Hades, "As a cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down into Sheol shall come up no more" (Job vii. 9). Hades, as the sequence of death, points inflexibly also to the final

consequence of it (death—Hades—second death, Rev. xx.), and thus to those whom it receives it offers nothing for which they can render thanks, as is said, Ps. vi. 5, "In Sheol who shall give thee thanks?" For all this, however, be it said in anticipation, there may be some there who have reason for thankfulness spite of Hades, as will become plainer further on. In Hades all that makes death terrible for men is concentrated, and, as a matter of course, torment is included, as appears in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The tumult of life is at an end, the light of this world extinguished, and the light of heaven does not penetrate thither. It is "a land of darkness and the shadow of death" (Job xx. 20–22), a land of stillness, where each has enough to do in contemplating his own suffering. No one is able to offer another consolation or a word of comfort which he needs himself. They are together who in life lived together; they see one another; they know one another and greet one another, but cannot help one another and share the suffering; and that is no blessed

reunion (*Wiedersehen*). Each has his place along with kindred spirits, but they no longer *live* with one another. What they were, that they are. In Hades the whole world-history comes together. It is the *rendezvous of history come to a stand-still in the midst of its movement*—family history, national history, world history, and each new arrival completes the missing members. It is the securest chamber of archives; only here below, and from the side of present existence, those archives are not legible. Sublime and more than merely poetic is the description that we read in Ezek. xxxii. One may say, *Hades is the cemetery of souls; it is even the continuation of death*, and in a way that is inevitable shows to souls, on which death has stamped its traits, what death really is. Hades is like the waterless pit that offered Joseph no refreshment (Zech. ix. 11; Heb. xiii. 20), and is thus the prison of souls. But the end of souls is not there, for it is a prison that at last will open its doors for the final step of its tenants. *Hades is a vestibule.* There is no doubt about it that

one is better off on earth than in Hades; for at least the life on earth is not in its own nature a first step to death and Hades, though it may become and has become so. It bears even yet the marks of being a blessed gift of God, which was its original character, and even in its condition of bondage it has in it the prophecy of the glorious freedom of the children of God.

As the Old Testament represents things, we observe that *for the believing and righteous of that time this realm of the dead is also the place to which they look as the goal of their pilgrimage.* Nowhere do we find a trace of joyful anticipation of death, or of a longing for death, such as we see in Simeon and Paul. The only saying that has that appearance was uttered by Elijah: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life" (1 Kings xix. 4). But that is a wail of despair, which expresses, indeed, a hope, but a hope that is very, very far from such hope as Paul expresses when he says, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). In Elijah's words it is the hope of one who despairs of the world, of

his people, and of his work, and who has only one refuge left, *i.e.*, the Lord that called him into his service and for his work. It is a hope that looks away and beyond Hades, of which we shall hear further expression in the confessions of others.

But, notwithstanding that hope, the fact remains that Hades receives *all* the dead, however different in character the people may be. Jacob laments: "I will go down into Sheol unto my son mourning" (Gen. xxxvii. 5). David enjoins on Solomon his son to bring Joab and Shimei down to Sheol with blood, and not let them come down with peace, because they had been the adversaries of him, the anointed of the Lord (1 Kings ii. 6, 9). Samuel, the servant of the Lord, says to Saul, "To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" (1 Sam. xxxviii. 19). He had said to him before, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, therefore the Lord hath rejected thee;" thus it was the servant of the Lord speaking to the rejected of the Lord, there by the witch of Endor, that said this. The Psalmist laments: "What man is he that

liveth and shall not see death? shall he [that can] deliver his soul from the hand of Sheol?" (Psalm lxxxix. 48). Hence the dismay felt even by the pious of the Old Testament in view of the condition after death. They shuddered at the prospect of entering the realm of the dead, Hades. And it is chiefly they whom the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has in mind when he says (Heb. ii. 15) that Christ by his death should redeem those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And in this connection we would remark now that, according to this passage, it was not till Christ died that redemption came to them.

HADES THE PORCH OF HEAVEN FOR OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS.

It is manifest that Hades was no fitting place for the pious of the Old Testament. How then are we to explain the presence of believers and unbelievers in one common place, without distinction of locality? We find the explanation precisely in the fact that Hades is only a vestibule, a tem-

porary place of sojourn, and that in especial it *was* such for the righteous of the Old Testament. As in Hades God's wrath is manifested, as the Lord himself says, "Mine anger burns in Sheol where it is deepest (Deut. xxxii. 22); it is, then, the proper place for the godless, as, *e.g.*, for Korah and his company, for such as will not let themselves be attracted by the holy wisdom of God, etc. This is distinctly recognized in many places of the Old Testament. And it is just in connection with the thought of it that, along with the prospect of Hades and above it, there shines for the righteous the dawn of another day, of a day when they shall be led forth from Hades. Thus the children of Korah console themselves in the forty-ninth Psalm. There will come a morning when the pious shall triumph over their adversaries. The latter, who deported themselves on earth as if they alone had a title to the everlasting possession of the world, will then be homeless. "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol" (Psalm xlix. 15). In this connection belongs the conviction

expressed in the Proverbs of Solomon: "The way of life is upward for the wise, that he may depart from Sheol beneath" (Prov. xv. 24; comp. xiii. 14). These are glimpses of light, recognitions of the truth apprehended by faith in times of the fear of death. They are glimpses that have a direct moulding influence on the expression of the promise of salvation, as, *e. g.*, when Zechariah (ix. 11) says, "By the blood of the covenant will I send forth thy prisoners [*i. e.*, the imprisoned Israelites] out of the pit wherein is no water."

Corresponding to this there must be an essential difference between the condition of the believing and righteous in the realm of the dead and the condition of the rest there. Even the pious also must feel what a man loses by death. But in place of self-consuming recollections of their loss, in place of the tormenting consciousness *that they have reached the beginning of the end*, came the hope of a future redemption, firmly believed while they were still on earth — the hope in the Lord who had promised, "O death, I will be thy plagues;

Sheol I will be thy destruction" (Hos. xiii. 14). With that there was set a limit to the power of Hades to penetrate the souls of believers with its terrors. Not, indeed, that Hades offered them any sort of consolation; yet they were not deprived of it. In this connection belong the intimations that there are degrees in Hades, according to which the reprobate are found in its deepest abyss, where its terrors are most concentrated and its torments burn the hottest, while on its borders are found those who have only to wait until a Mighty One appears, before whom the bolts of Hades shall burst and its gates fly open.

Thus, along with the sad prospect of the realm of death, there can be uttered consistently the words that testify to a quiet consolation: "Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken from that which is evil. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness" (Isa. lvii. 1, 2). David can say, "My flesh also shall rest in hope;" and Jacob can say, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." While

the rich man in Hades suffers torments, Lazarus at the same time, spite of Hades, rests in Abraham's bosom. And these ineffaceable distinctions contain the result of the precedent life. But in the Old Testament the conviction that Hades does not eternally end all, more and more gets the supremacy; and beyond the prospect of the realm of death and of the dead, the pious are able to apprehend the expectation of a future resurrection of the dead.

WHY A HADES FOR ALL THE DEAD BEFORE CHRIST?

After all that we have now considered, we may propose the inquiry: "How does it happen that, instead of an eternal decision, instead of a complete separation of men after death, and keeping them separate, instead of a final recompense, the Old Testament shows us a universal realm of the dead? Such a situation is not the valid solution of the moral contrasts of life that we look for in a life beyond death.

The reason for this is, that, according to the gracious decree of God, such a legal and

valid solution cannot come about otherwise than in connection with a redemption. Without that, a judicial decision affecting the life of men would, spite of differences in particulars, be adverse and ruinous to every one; for the moral foundation, the sinful heart, must there, where the coverings of this life are stripped off, appear unveiled, and the only difference that would remain would be this, that those who in life were penitent would acquiesce in the judgment submissive to suffering, while others would resentfully, yet helplessly, strive to ward it off. The Old Testament view of one realm of the dead for *all* is a sublime testimony to the universal sinfulness of the human race.

Until, therefore, there should come about a rightful redemption by means of a valid sacrifice, death, the wages of sin, reigned, and with it Hades, the continuation of death, even over those who looked for redemption. And now we can understand Simeon's joyous anticipation of death *at the incoming of the new covenant:* "Lord now thou lettest thy servant depart in peace, for

mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And we can understand how, in the Psalms, those witnesses of the inner life of the pious in Old Testament times, there should be such full and various expression of the bitter sorrow of death. *This difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament prospect of existence beyond the grave is not to be referred to an imperfect knowledge of the former concerning life after death, but to the difference between the periods.* It is a historical difference.

A CHANGE BEYOND THE GRAVE WHEN CHRIST CAME.

It was actually different with existence beyond the grave in Old Testament times from what it is now. If it were true, as many erroneously affirm, that the Israelites were unfamiliar with the thought of eternal life, it would still be a most surprising thing did they furnish no representations of the state and life after death, or only very defective ones, when all heathen nations, and especially the civilized nations of antiquity, had such richly developed representations

about the future and the condition after death. Would Israel alone have been able to forego such attempts? Oh no; the matter has quite another explanation. Faith in the living God and his inviolable law raised an inexorable barrier to all dreams of the heathen world regarding the state after death, and especially to all their imaginary hopes of good. There only remained the certainty of divine judgment. Even the heathen world could not get rid of this, but carried it about in its conscience as a consciousness of guilt and judgment; with which, of course, their aristocratic philosophy made no attempt to settle accounts. All hopes of the future, however, were, for Old Testament saints, attached to the promise of a Messiah and the expectation of redemption founded on that. Before that appeared, they could hope nothing even for existence beyond the grave. The living and the dying must hope for the salvation of God (Gen. xlix. 18.) Members of the people of God felt the need of everlasting life as much and even more than the heathen, and they cherished the

hope of everlasting life not less than the heathen. Only they could not expect it as something to be after death; for only the Messiah could bring it (2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 15). They must wait for him, and for the new period then to dawn.

WHY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS SAID SO LITTLE OF BLISS BEYOND THE GRAVE.

It cannot, therefore, surprise us that so little is said in the Old Testament about bliss beyond the grave. And we have no need to explain this silence by assuming that it was first through Babylonian and Persian influences that Israel learned to seek Paradise beyond the grave, and hope for a resurrection of the dead. Those influences are totally inadequate to help us comprehend how and in what sense a people that knew the living God, and had his law and his promise, could propound the question that was put to our Lord, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Whereas, on the other hand, that question is easily accounted for in view of the Old Testament prospects. But that the Messianic

hopes produced no richer development of the hopes of the future should occasion no wonder. For redemption is something so amazing for the world, to which calamity and death are become the law of life, that it involved exceeding much in order to preserve this hope through centuries and millenniums.

The more the custodians of this hope had lost themselves in its details, the harder it would have been to save and preserve it through the contradictions of things seen. The task of taking note of the successive particulars in the realization of their hope was more than they had time for. There are, notwithstanding, traces of a hope of a resurrection of the dead, though it is not well defined or clearly expressed. That there was such a hope does not seem strange in those who so bitterly deplored death, both in its cause and in its consequences, and in whom the hope offered defiance to death and all connected with it. Hence it is not surprising that the epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 19) ascribes even to Abraham the belief in the possibility of a

resurrection of the dead. The first form of this hope that in the Old Testament reaches out beyond death, is the expectation of deliverance from death and from the power of death, by which the ungodly and sinners will be permanently held captive. Especially in the Psalms do we find its expression, and in the confession of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." With the figure of Israel's death is conjoined the deeply impressive and sublime representation of a promised resurrection (Ezek. xxxvii; Isa. xxvi. 19 sqq.; Hos. vi. 1 sqq.). Such a pictorial representation would not have been possible if the thought of a resurrection had not already originated in some quarter. And so, again, perhaps by occasion of this image, the hope of conquering death (Isa. xxv. 8) grew to be a distinct hope of the resurrection of the dead (comp. Hos. xiii. 14). Thus the prophecy of Daniel (xii. 2) fell on ground ready prepared: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This is the first and

only clear and definite word of promise in the Old Testament of the resurrection. But when at length, by the discipline of prophecy, divine judgments, and merciful deliverances, the hope of the coming salvation became a possession never more to be lost, and constituted a part of the very existence of the people of Israel, then the hope of redemption took the form of hope of resurrection. It finds various expression in the Apocrypha (Tob. ii. 17; Macc. vii. 9); and when Christ appeared, we find it spread among the entire nation. The Saducees, who were representatives of pleasure-loving, egoistic, self-seeking unbelief, denied it. Jesus proved it by the simple fact that, after the Patriarchs were dead, when God was giving the fundamental revelation to Moses (Exod. iii. 6 sqq.), he called himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and yet is God of the living and not of the dead, who would also fulfil to the Patriarchs the promise that he had given to them. He points to it as a fact that cannot possibly escape a believing and penetrating consideration, inasmuch as

where God enters into communion with men, which of course aims at eternity, there the intention is to conquer death and redeem to life.

EXPECTATION OF CHRIST BECAME EXPECTATION OF RESURRECTION.

Thus the significant fact will not be incomprehensible, that in Jesus, and his contemporaries and his disciples, we find the hope of resurrection, not as a constituent part merely, but as the proper form and expression of the Messianic hope. The hope of a Messiah is the hope of resurrection. When Paul was called to answer before the chief council in Jerusalem, he took advantage of the circumstance that a part were Sadducees, representatives of unbelief, and part were Pharisees, who at least believed firmly in the authority of God's word, and "he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts xxiii. 6). Thus to Paul, also, Israel's hope of the fulfilment of the old divine promises was at the same

time and essentially a hope of resurrection. Before Felix he confessed, "that after the way which they call a sect, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets, and have hope toward God, which they themselves also look for, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts xxiv. 14, 15). Before Agrippa he says, "And now I stand here and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to come. For which hope's sake I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts xxvi. 6–8). Paul explains the connection between the hope of resurrection and the faith in Jesus as the Messiah to this effect, that according to the word of prophecy the Messiah must suffer and be the first of the resurrection of the dead, in order to proclaim the light of life to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts xxvi. 22, 23). According to this the Athe-

nians were not mistaken in supposing they heard of the resurrection of the dead in general, when Paul spoke of the man whom God raised from the dead, and by whom he will judge the whole circuit of the earth in righteousness (Acts xvii. 31 sqq.). So, too, the Saducees were quite correct in understanding that the proclamation of the risen Messiah involved the resurrection of the dead (Acts iv. 2). Only, in the case of the Athenians, this connection was detected by their natural and correct feeling, whereas the Saducees, in their conscious opposition to the old truth of salvation, were clearly aware of this mutual coherence.

Messiah and resurrection of the dead are two things indissolubly connected. But this only confirms what we have already found to be true, viz., that before the fulfilment of the promise the outlook into the state after death could only be obscure and sad. On the other side of the grave, also, the period of waiting extended to the day of the fulfilment, *itself presenting nothing but the feeling and experience of death;* in which state of waiting also the pious had

nothing in which they might rejoice beside what they took there with them, viz., the hope of the redemption. When the period of redemption was come, *then also the outlook into the state beyond the grave became, as it must, another thing from what it was;* for the condition after death became different.

II.

PARADISE OPENED.

THIS great change, and the moment of its inauguration, is characterized by a saying of Jesus Christ, that has an unfamiliar sound to an Old Testament ear, viz., that hitherto unheard promise that he made to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." *This is something wholly new.* Paradise is above in heaven, whither Paul was transported. But heaven had never hitherto opened up for men, those two witnesses of God excepted, Enoch and Elijah, who never saw death at all, and consequently never saw the continuation of death, the realm of death. Nowhere in the Old Testament does heaven appear as the place of bliss, as the location of the eternal, unchangeable, and unfading inheritance, of the spiritual and eternal blessings in heavenly things, as it does in the New Testa-

ment. It is ever and only referred to as an unapproachable place where the unveiled glory of God is revealed. Christ does not take away some veil that had till then intercepted the view into the existence beyond the grave. He has removed an obstacle, he has taken away a wall of separation that till then hindered men from entering into a life of bliss.

Christ himself had to enter into the kingdom of death after having shared with us life and death. But instantly it would needs be manifest that death had no rights over him and could not hold him. He went through the realm of death, and appeared before the presence of God with the sacrifice he offered for us, as one who had died, not for himself and on his own account, but in fellowship with us and on our behalf. Thereupon Paradise, with all the hitherto lost glory of Paradise, opened up first of all for those who had till this time waited for this sacrifice in penitent and steadfast faith, and as the last among them, for that thief. For when death could no longer hold Christ, it could also no longer hold those for whom his all-

sufficient sacrifice availed. After he had appeared before the presence of God for us, and the sanctuary was opened up, the gates of Hades could no longer detain his believing ones. A change took place on the other side of the grave. Heaven opened up, and only those remained behind in the realm of death who on earth walked not the way of life. Matthew informs us of a sign of this wonderful change in the kingdom of the dead. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, in token that the way into the heavenly original of the sanctuary was now open forever—"and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened" (Matt. xxvii. 51–53).

The reign of death was broken, the relations beyond the grave were become different from what they were; and now the effect of this became manifest also on this side of the grave. So far was it from true that Christ should continue under the power and dominion of the realm of death, that, on the contrary, having entered into death, it was impossible that he could be holden

of it (Acts ii. 24). That the redemption was accomplished, that death, the legal consequence of sin, had lost its power, was manifest first in himself by his resurrection. That set him forth as the first-fruits of them that slept, and as first-born brother of the redeemed.

WHAT CHRIST'S RESURRECTION MEANS.

The resurrection is the complete abrogation of death and of all that clusters around it, all connected with it, all its consequences. It is the entire and complete release of man from all the injury that befell him through death. *The resurrection* is the return into life, a return conditioned on this abrogation of death. And the return is into a free life,—a life which, forever freed from the condemnation of sin, is endowed with the powers of eternity. Such is the result of the redemption. And as Christ representatively took our judgment on himself, suffering and dying as if he were one of us, so first on him, because he was the Redeemer, was manifest what it means to be saved; he was the first-fruits of them that sleep.

What is true of him is true of the whole race of his brethren, with whom he has indissolubly united himself. Either he dies, and with him humanity goes to ruin, whose stability is involved in him and his fate, or he triumphs; then he triumphs for his race and his race with him, unless even yet some will have nothing to do with him. If he returns to his brethren, if death cannot hold him, then it cannot have dominion over him, and the abolition of death is at hand, the resurrection of the dead, the transfiguration of the living.

We have accustomed ourselves to keep the hope of the resurrection quite in the background of Christian *thinking*. In our thoughts we would be all right, forsooth, even without it, if only a purely spiritual life were promised us; and we do not consider that with such spiritualizing of all cravings (the apostle would call it a false spirituality) the reality of their gratification is more and more dissipated. We must learn to feel and think in a more realistic fashion, and not build up for ourselves a system of eternity out of the facts and dissonances of

the present. The resurrection of the dead is not an article of the creed meant only to round off the whole system of Christian truth. It is rather the goal and the climax of the divine work of redemption, its most necessary and glorious development, the ripe fruit of the tree of life, that does not, as that fig-tree, put forth leaves instead of fruit. In the resurrection of the dead it becomes manifest for the first time *what it really means to be redeemed*, and that is its essential significance.

Therefore Christ regards the raising of the dead as his essential work as Saviour. He says it not only once, he repeats it three times in that wonderfully "hard saying" recorded in John vi., in which he sets forth the programme of his calling as Saviour: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. No man can come to

me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 39, 40, 44). For this reason he calls himself the resurrection and the life. Death must yield unconditionally before him when he displays his power; and as the other miracles that he did were signs and prophecies of his power to make all things new, so the conclusive sign of his being Saviour is given in the concluding words of his answer to the inquiring Baptist, "The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 5).

Thus, then, the resurrection of the dead is an essential and proper part of the divine work of salvation and redemption that was to be performed on us; and, in fact, so essential is it, that, as already quoted, Paul draws the conclusion that at first sight is so surprising: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen"—a conclusion that in turn forms the premise for the next: "And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in

Christ are perished" (1 Cor. xv. 12, 16–18). This conclusion is surprising, because he makes the acknowledgment of a fact of the past depend on a fact of the future about which there is debate; and because therewith he summons the assurance of our faith and state of salvation to testify to the past and future. In order to understand the decisive significance here attached by the apostle to the resurrection of the dead, we must represent to ourselves the significance that belongs to the resurrection of Christ. Both facts are so important to Christianity that they not merely stand or fall together, but with them is involved the question whether the faith, in which some live and others have died, is a self-delusion, a betrayal of mankind, or not. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then it is in vain and superfluous to believe, and "only he that lives is right," as the Sadduceeism of old and of modern times maintains. This is now the significance of the resurrection of Christ, that Jesus has actually accomplished the work for which he died on the cross, according to the word of Paul, "Jesus

was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). If Christ did not rise, then he died in vain and there is no redemption. It is perfectly correct, then, to say, if the dead rise not, then Christ has died in vain. From this it appears that the resurrection hope is inseparably connected with the fundamental facts and principles of Christian faith.

Let us look, however, a little closer at the meaning of the resurrection of Christ in order to perceive what it means for our faith, and at the same time for the fulfilment of our hope. As he hung upon the cursed tree, and suffered what did not belong to *him*, viz., the wage and curse of *our* sin, in him was found the representative and mediator for us, and our redemption was accomplished. He placed himself in our ranks and became like one of us in order to share all with us, life and death, and to help us by his sacrifice. Because he was our blood and flesh, he experienced in himself what we have to bear and suffer, although in him the inward postulate, *i. e.*, fellowship in sin, was wanting. He needed

not to die, and yet he died. Else had the judgment then fallen on the world. But now his death has taken the place of the judgment, and the world is reconciled. It owes its stability to the death of Christ, and likewise all its future prospect to him, henceforth its head and Lord. He has not through death taken his departure from it, his soul being safe with the Father. Were that the case, then would all and every hope of the future have vanished; he would be the only one delivered; all the rest of us would be lost, for no one has *his* hope. No; he did not die in vain. Death cannot hold him; the Father gives him back to us, for he has reconciled us for the sake of his death. He belongs to us since he took on him flesh and blood, and now belongs eternally to the race for which he died. He is now the first-fruits of the redeemed, the first-born from the dead. Our freedom was made manifest in him first, that from him might spring forth a new stream of life in the desert, and he become the beginner of a new race that lives in the power of indissoluble life.

He assumed and bore our servitude when he bound himself indissolubly to us. His freedom was at the same time the morning dawn of our deliverance, who are his brethren, and ought to be. For that reason Paul not merely calls him the Prince of Life, as Peter does (Acts iii. 15), but combines him and us most intimately,—calling him the first-born from the dead (Col. i. 18), the first-fruits of them that slept (1 Cor. xv. 20). Thus we may perceive by Christ's resurrection how necessarily redemption and resurrection belong together, and at the same time perceive what is the essential meaning of the resurrection, viz., that it is the beginning of what the apostle calls the glorious liberty of the children of God, who at present wait for the redemption of their bodies (Rom. viii. 21–23).

THE NEW EPOCH OF LIFE.

With the resurrection begins a new period, the epoch of the blessed eternity, in which we shall first experience what it really is to live. For then not only will there be no more sorrow, crying, and pain, but,

above all, "there shall be no more death" (Rev. xxi. 4). Picture the dominion of death. In many thousands of instances it does not suffer life to grow up; it carries off the half of mankind before the first year of life. We stand beside the graves of our children, and ask, why did they die? What have they of that life which God's decree has allotted to us in the measure of 70 to 80 years? Did he not mean we should lead, use, and bear life so long before we can die blessed? In many thousands of other instances death casts its shadow backward into the life of such, of whom we may say they were born for suffering, and hardly ever in their lives could they be glad, because death so long and painfully consumed them. But in every instance what a lamentable goal and end of life is death! so unworthy of men, so little human! Every tie of love is relentlessly broken. Where it should eternally be said there is companionship, it is said there is loneliness (*wo es für ewig heissen sollte: gemeinsam, heisst es einsam*). Death is as a mockery and derision of all love, of all endeavor, of every

purpose, of every struggle of man. Nobility, art, wisdom—all must return to dust.

The hope of resurrection removes the ban that rests on our hearts. In the resurrection of the dead and the blessed restoration of life it will become manifest that our children who died an early death were not born in vain. And so many, whose life was only suffering, and whose lips only asked, Lord, wherefore? will then still be glad of their life. And it will then be perceived, likewise, that the fellowship of love need never end. The resurrection brings the compensation—the more than rich compensation, for everything that life in this world of death denies us; and we understand why it is the Lord himself tells us to wait for it in order to find redress, amends, and everything for which a man may wait and hope who longs for the salvation of God and the redemption of his life (Luke xx. 35, 36; comp. Matt. xix. 27–29; Mark x. 29, 30; Luke xiv. 14). Truly it has a wonderful meaning, and one cannot smile at the simplicity, but can only sympathize, when love writes on the monuments of its

departed, or self-denying faith confesses what is able to heal the breaking hearts, "I have hope toward God that there shall be a resurrection of the dead."

Resurrection hope is an essential part of Christian faith, of faith in redemption. Our Easter festivals become the celebration in advance of the great day of redemption, as they are the after-celebration of that first day of the redemption.

We stand between the two Easters. By virtue of the first Easter we go to meet the last Easter, if we have entered into possession of the redemption purchased for us. The possession of redemption, the state of grace in which the assurance of the resurrection of Christ preserves us, guarantees to us at the same time the future. *The resurrection from death is guaranteed to us by the facts of our inner life.*

RESURRECTION GUARANTEED BY INWARD EXPERIENCE.

As death does not come upon us without our previously having in us the cause of death, viz., sin, whereby the powers of death

work in us, so too we do not attain to the resurrection from death unless death's dominion over us be destroyed, its sting taken away, and powers of resurrection become operative in us. But that the dominion of death and the power of sin is broken must be and is something to be inwardly perceived, just as much as is the painful fact that by nature and our own guilt we are sold under sin and fallen under the ban of death and judgment. We can experience and judge in our inward life the reality, truth, and actuality of redemption that has become manifest in the resurrection of Christ. For him who has voluntarily entered into fellowship with Christ, the fact of restored peace with God through redemption, the fact of deliverance from guilt and judgment, is just as indisputable as is the fact of guilt and enmity against God. It is only requisite for this that one should be inwardly united with him who bore our punishment, and that one should take on himself the condemnation of the cross in the fashion of Paul, who says, "I am crucified with Christ;" "we have become united

with his death" (Gal. ii. 19; Rom. vi. 5). Then we will also be like the resurrection. The fact of our resurrection, the self-consciousness of faith that no logic can destroy, guarantees to us the future, viz., freedom, full immunity from death. The powers of death, from which our souls have escaped in faith on Jesus, can hold nothing about us captive. Since we have part in the redemption, of which the Redeemer himself is the first-fruits, we know that we shall be like him.

We would not, perhaps, ourselves venture to think of a resurrection. But since the thought is given by the resurrection of Christ, and the word of God, that grain of mustard-seed of our faith, assures us of it, now we perceive, also, that thereby is really given us the very word for an inconceivably great matter. We find no reason in our inward life and experience to doubt such communication and promise of God's word. Everything agrees with our inward experience, as is ever the wont with God's word. Only he can still doubt who is a stranger to such experience, and as indif-

ferent to it as to the inquiry about inhabitants of the moon.

What we have in the believing possession of redemption is the beginning of eternal life even in this life, and this is the opposite of what we brought with us into the world by our birth, viz., death. That death will eventually be overcome by this life is beyond doubt for him who by virtue of this beginning goes to meet eternal life, albeit he still meets the death of this body. For this reason this beginning of eternal life is a state of progress to "attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 11); and in this respect it contrasts with the natural motion and direction of life, which is to "bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. vii. 5; vi. 21, sqq.). "Because I live, ye shall live also," says our Lord to his disciples, in view of his resurrection. Since this promise has an initial fulfilment in the inward exemption from condemnation and destruction, it is at the same time, as experience of the inward life, a guaranteed prophecy of the future, unless some blighting frost or wantonness destroy the blossoms. The

renewing that happens to us in the communion of Christ is already an actual participation in the resurrection. *My* life *there* became free from the bands of death, though centuries lie between. "God has raised us up with Christ" (comp. Eph. ii. 6; Col. iii. 1; Rom. vi. 5) says the apostle; and the certainty of the full communion with Christ and all that he possesses testifies to us that this inward experience of the redemption will eventually be consummated in the complete freedom of the children of God. For nothing that Christ has taken part in with us is excepted from the redemption. Like as he himself, according to his human nature, experienced redemption in himself, so it must in like measure be shared by those who are bound to him, not merely by thoughts, but by a life like his in faith. Wonderful is the beginning of everlasting life in us. But whoever has received eternal life here below, to him the wonderful consummation and developed result is just as certain as otherwise death and destruction are irrevocably certain.

The apostle refers us to these experiences

and facts of our inner life as unassailable guarantees of the future resurrection when he says that the Holy Spirit, the gift of first-fruits to us, is the earnest of our inheritance until the day of redemption (Eph. i. 14), in virtue of which we wait for the redemption of our body (Rom. viii. 23; comp. 2 Cor. v. 5). Or when he says, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin (forfeited to death), but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 10, 11). On account of our present habits of thinking we need to use some pains to accustom ourselves to the great significance of our bodies, that we only receive life as bound to the body, and that we must be careful so to keep life in reality (Ps. xvi. 8–11). Every attempt to preserve our life is wrecked at last by death. Hence the apostle sighs, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). And

hence the certainty of the redemption gives him the certainty of the resurrection.

BLISS POSSIBLE WHILE AWAITING RESURRECTION.

This connection between the hope of resurrection and the experiences of inner life has especial importance in two other directions. In the first place, it becomes plain to us how a life of bliss is possible after this life, in the period that intervenes till the resurrection. If by virtue of the Spirit of adoption and redemption we can be blessed in hope even now, in spite of this life in the body, oppressed as it is with the burden of mortality, how much more will that be a blissful state when we have laid aside this body of sin, even if it be not a state of completion. One who is born again leads a divided life. Inwardly he has begun eternal life, while as to flesh and blood he is subject to death. This discord, that can become intensified to the keenest suffering, and even extort the prayer, "It is enough; now, Lord, take away my life," is terminated by death, so that one may have not only cheerful courage in view of

death, but also a longing for death, like Paul, who says, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). This is, however, still consistent with saying, "We would rather not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. v. 4). The eternal life of such as shall be perfected, not by transfiguration but by resurrection, has, so to speak, three stages—the beginning of eternal life in this life, blessedness after death, perfection of glory in the resurrection.

HOPE OF RESURRECTION PROMOTES SANCTIFICATION.

The second thing to which this connection between hope of resurrection and the experiences and facts of our inner life points, is the importance that sanctification has for the resurrection. When we have entered on possession of redemption and eternal life, we are directed to follow the way in which we must wait for and hasten to the great approaching day of the redemption, and go to meet the resurrection of the dead. This being so, it concerns us that

eternal life should become more and more a second nature to us. We must let the powers of life penetrate us more and more. Whatever opposes the spirit of life must be subdued; whatever promotes death must be shunned; whatever may conduct us to death must be removed and renounced. The original connection of our personal life and will with sin is dissolved, and our soul has acquired a new independence towards our inbred sinful nature. Now it behooves us to cherish more and more faithfully the communion of the Spirit of Christ, that life may become ever stronger and death ever weaker. Then the resurrection hope, supported by the inner life, will develop, ever fuller and more confident of triumph, the more intimate the communion with the Lord becomes, of which the apostle says, "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17; 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18).

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED?

How the resurrection hope shall eventually be realized is a question that we may and must quietly leave to the future and

with the Prince of Life. For it will hardly be possible for us to represent to ourselves the manner in which the renewing of our bodies shall take place. Only we must hold firmly to two things: *First*, there must be maintained a connection between our present bodies and the resurrection body, for in the resurrection is to be made manifest "the redemption of our body." This connection is emphasized in the apostolic confession of faith by the strong expression, "resurrection of the flesh," and thus all refinements of the resurrection hope are discountenanced. If there is to be a resurrection, we must find our own identity in the new body. The *second* thing on which we must insist is, that this connection, which Paul illustrates by the dying grain of wheat and its corresponding fruit (1 Cor. xv. 36–38), consists with the exclusion of everything in which the consequences of sin and the powers of death have asserted themselves here below, so that the corporeal part of us, as originally and divinely constituted, shall come to its glorious development. Whatever was and could be pene-

trated by the powers of eternal life is carried over. The remainder is passed away, forfeited to dust and given back to earth, which itself waits for renovation. Therefore the rule obtains, "It is sown corruptible, it will rise incorruptible; it is sown in dishonor, it will rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it will rise in power; it is sown a natural body (literally, a body belonging to the soul, determined by the soul that is estranged from God), it will rise a spiritual body, penetrated and united with the life that is from God. The corruptible must put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality (1 Cor. xv. 42–44, 53).

This is the way the apostle replies to the question, "How are the dead raised, and with what manner of body do they come?" (1 Cor. xv. 35), a question by which, even in his time, some thought to disprove the resurrection, and perhaps even to make it appear ridiculous. It is the only place where the Scripture gives us some clew as to the How of the resurrection; and we must guard against making highly colored inferences from the apostle's words. He

evidently (1 Cor. xv. 45) contemplates the earthly body, even previous to the coming of sin and its consequence death, as preliminary to what should be, so that now the resurrection, sin having intervened, brings us to the goal to which God originally destined us. When we consider how much the apostle insists on the connection between the resurrection body and our present corporeality, we will not incorrectly represent the difference between the original divine purpose and what we have now to hope for, if we say, instead of the transfiguration of our bodies according to the original divine purpose, there only remains the possibility of their transformation. Those whom the day of the Lord shall find still living escape, indeed, death; but in place of death they will be changed; they will not be unclothed but clothed upon (1 Cor. xv. 52; 2 Cor. v. 4; 1 Thess. iv. 16, sq.). We shall no more be hindered in the free use of the gift of life, but in our measure will be like him who according to the Father's will should be the first-born among many brethren. "We look," it is said, "for the Lord Jesus Christ,

who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. iii. 20, 21). The resurrection is the key-stone in the process of realizing *in* us the redemption that has been accomplished *for* us. In it and along with it will be renewed all that death has destroyed. And when from the dust of so many thousand years a redeemed human race shall arise, then will be manifest the glorious freedom of the children of God, in which all creation will participate. Then all things will become new, and in the renovated world will no voice of weeping and lament be heard any more. There no suffering nor cry nor pain shall any more be, and nothing shall be heard of a discord between man and the world about him.

If we must be content with this, without being able to penetrate further the glory of the resurrection or of the regeneration of all things, still we know that we must be content only because these things surpass the power of thought. What it is to be redeemed is not something to be thought

out, but to be experienced; and after all, when the hour comes, we too shall be "like those that dream."

THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED.

But we have still another thing to take into consideration. So far the resurrection has appeared to us as a necessary part of redemption, and only as such. But we know that all are to rise from the dead—some to life, some to judgment—righteous and unrighteous (Dan. xii. 2; Jno. v. 25, 28, 29; Acts xxiv. 15). What of the resurrection of those who have no share in redemption? On what is it founded? What shall it be?

The dead in Christ shall rise first, when the Lord shall come at the end of the world. This is the first resurrection (1 Thess. iv. 16; Rev. xx. 5 sqq.). After that is the end, the second resurrection. *All* will rise, for Christ has redeemed all; and even those who in unbelief have despised this redemption will experience how wide-reaching and world-comprehending this redemption is. Their resurrection will testify to them that

they too needed not to have abode in death. But because they did not accept the redemption and made no use of it, they have come to be so indissolubly bound to death that they are able only to give a look at the glory now irrevocably lost to them, a look of apprehension that arouses every sensibility and enhances their pain to the utmost. The resurrection gives nothing to them. It only seals their fate, an eternal continuance of death. This, says the Scripture, so darkly and sadly, is the second death (Rev. xx. 14; comp. ii. 11). For them the resurrection is only the transition from the intermediate place and vestibule of the realm of death to the final penalty of condemnation. After they have received what properly appertains to them of the redemption, they must depart eternally whither the power of sin, of unbelief, and of death irresistibly impels them, voluntarily, and yet against their will, into eternal remoteness from God, into eternal deprivation of light and of life. They are dead, ruined. For them all that God has thought, done, prepared, is lost. Such is

the second resurrection. Yet, perhaps, in the second resurrection even those will celebrate a resurrection of life who only after this life could learn to know the Saviour, and then believed on him and were converted to him.*

Then at once all struggling and sighing of the creation has an end. All will participate in the glorious freedom of the children of God, and the Lord redeems his word, "Behold, I make all things new." Then the separation between heaven the place of the blessed, and earth, that has continued till then, will cease to exist. The earth will no longer stand in a position between the realm of death and heaven; but heaven and earth will again constitute a connected whole, and the tabernacle, the sanctuary of God, will be with the children of men. Such is the future that lies beyond the grave.

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* See translator's note at the end, pp. 112–117.

III.

RESURRECTION DELAYED THAT THE GOSPEL MAY BE PREACHED.

THE resurrection day draws near only by the road of history. The redeeming word, "It is finished," does not immediately and magically transform the world of the curse, the ground that bears thorns and thistles (Heb. vi. 8), into a garden of God, and translate mankind out of a land of misery and of alienation into the heavenly paradise. Man went voluntarily the way which, then, against his will conducted him away from paradise. The past was justly closed up and return debarred to him. Only the divine decree of redemption made it possible for the sinful world to continue in existence. Else would the judgment have taken place at once in the beginning of history. Now it has been postponed by the patience of God that it might event-

ually be taken away. By virtue of the promise history began, that mankind might return to the forsaken fountain of life, to the living God. Mankind as a whole has the promise; the fulfilment concerns all mankind; the condition, too, concerns all mankind. With the accomplished fulfilment of redemption in Christ the last time began, and the end itself, the last day, the day of resurrection, draws near. But it can now not otherwise or sooner appear than when all mankind has learned to know their salvation, and had opportunity to decide whether they will have everlasting life from this redemption, or will persevere without God in their own way. Therefore the gospel of the kingdom must before be preached to all nations for a witness. Then the end will come. This is what still delays both the final and utmost development of godlessness, the mystery of iniquity, and also the second coming of the Lord for the redemption of his own. For this reason alone we still stand between the two Easters. How is it then for us, and how is it *at present* with the state after death?

THE PRESENT BLESSEDNESS OF HEAVEN.

It does not yet appear what we shall be (1 John iii. 2). This is applicable here. For what we shall be will first appear when the corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality, *i. e.*, when the Lord comes again. But *the realm of death is no longer the place of those who have, by faith, laid hold on salvation.* Having become partakers of salvation, *they have already, in this life, begun the eternal life.* The realm of death can no longer be the place for them, for they would then not be partakers of salvation if the consequences of death were still manifested in them. We die according to the law of our birth; we live according to the law of the new birth, the redemption. When we die, life must therefore also become manifest. We belong to Christ, whom the heaven has received until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his prophets (Acts iii. 21). Therefore not the realm of death, Hades, but the place where Christ is, the superterrestrial blessed world

of the yet hidden, unfailing possessions—in a word, heaven—there is the place of those who in faith die blessed. Here below their life is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii. 1–3). Their inheritance is not in this world, nor yet is it something in progress of becoming. It is there, and is laid up for them as an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away (1 Pet. i. 3, 4); as also the kingdom of God, the sum total of all bliss and of all redemptive possessions, has from all eternity its locality above as kingdom of heaven, until it also shall fill the world on this side. For the present, if we may venture so to speak, heaven is the intermediate place of believers, instead of the realm of death, until all becomes new, and it is said on earth, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. xxi. 1 sqq.).

Such is the change that has taken place with reference to Hades, the realm of death. It is no longer the place of sojourn for those who, by faith, have received and entered on their participation in redemption. When they come to die and depart out of this world, where they as little belong forever

as the Lord, there is for them beyond the grave no more continuance of death. The angels of God bear their souls thither where Christ has preceded them, to heaven, the place of eternal life and of the glory of God, there to be till they and all saints shall be revealed from thence with Christ. Hence Paul says (Phil. i. 23), "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ," for with him it is self-evident that Christ's high-priestly prayer is heard now and forever: "Father, I will that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 24). Heaven, known in the Old Testament only as the unapproachable place of superterrestrial divine majesty and glory, is, in the New Testament, opened also to men, so far as they partake of the redemption and are in possession of it. It is there now for men, and instead of the prospect into the obscure silence and desert of Hades, there is the view of a land of light, which, because imperishable and never-fading and pure, far transcends all the glory of the earth, that is stung by the worm of death and perish-

ableness, or vanity, as the Scripture calls it. And heaven is not to open to us only a long time after death, as it did to Old Testament saints, but immediately after this life, and for his sake who redeemed us and is now there above, and because we are redeemed, and are not yet to be redeemed, as those ancient saints when they died.

Heaven is not the consummation, which does not take place until the resurrection; but it is bliss. Waiting for the consummation does not exclude bliss. It is already bliss here below to know one's self to be redeemed, and to be able to say in the power of redemption, amid all the present labor and trouble, Wherefore we faint not, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor. iv. 16). So, then, it is at length truly bliss to be exempt from all labor and trouble, to be translated into the world of imperishable, undefiled, unfading existence, from which proceed the powers that we taste even here (Heb. vi. 4). Waiting for the consummation does not diminish the bliss, for that already here below even forms

a part of the blessedness of believers. It is itself a component part of heavenly bliss, and so much the more since, when once there, all that makes waiting hard, all bitter experiences in ourselves and from the world about us, all the laments and wrestlings to which the psalmist bears witness (Ps. xlii. 27), lie behind us. The bliss after death is not yet that complete, glorious freedom of the children of God, and yet those who are there feel nothing but freedom and peace. There is nothing left of the fettered condition, of the creation's subjection to vanity and to the service of what is transitory (Rom. viii. 20 sq.). As the life of faith below is a life out of faith into faith, a progress from power to power (Rom. i. 17; Ps. lxxxiv. 8; Isa. xl. 29 sqq.), so above and after this life it is a progress from bliss to bliss, from glory to glory. All affliction is unqualifiedly at an end, for the present world from which believers are removed lies at their feet. As the patience of the Lord does not destroy *his* bliss, so still less will the waiting for the consummation destroy the bliss of those who are

with him (comp. 2 Pet. iii. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, 18). When the apostle would rather live to see the day of consummation and undergo change, instead of dying before the day of the Lord (2 Cor. v. 4), it is not because bliss does not begin already after death — on the contrary, he knows that after his departure he will be with Christ (Phil. i. 23)—but it is because he would, if permissible, be exempt from the experience of death. For death is and remains an enemy (1 Cor. xv. 26), and whoever must suffer it finds it an affliction that must be borne and overcome. But it can also be overcome by the believer, even though before the conflict he shudders at it; for he can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." For some it will be a wrestling hard and painful, yet without being conquered; and for others it will be as with Stephen—"its face was as the face of an angel." And at last all that are made blessed will even give the praise, Thou canst lead through the doors of death dreaming. Such is the song of praise of the spirits of just ones made perfect (Heb. xii. 23).

WHAT MAKES A BLESSED DEATH?

And now a word about blessed dying itself. That is not blessed dying when simply the pains of the body cease to be felt, the sensibilities discontinue, the senses gradually and softly evanish, the features become smooth, and the last breath softly passes away. Mostly, indeed, the end comes thus, so that the body, and the soul that is bound to the body, just because it is still so bound, do not feel how the bands are loosed. This is a beneficent thing for all, be they blessed afterwards or not; and it is not good, it is no kindness, to console with this prospect those who have cause to shudder at what comes with and after death. The thing of importance is, what will be the awaking? Many a one without hope may have in this way a gentle end. Likely the most will have this, and those, perhaps, above all, who have not been used, when living and in their senses, to go about with thoughts of death.

No; a blessed death is something else. It is where one in the full possession of his

faculties has prayed for a rational and believing end, and receives help, by the comfort and assurance of the Holy Spirit, to die according to faith; and if once more before the end the soul feels what it is to die, and that dying and death are not merely consumption of muscular fibre, the organs becoming callous, and "chemistry of corruption," but something proceeding from the judgment of God—if then by such help one keeps the faith, that is a blessed death. There we experience in a profound degree, perhaps never felt before, what conscience is. Nothing of the whole life has passed away, though life is now ending. Our entire life presents itself before us—deeds, thoughts, impressions long in the past, yet not passed away. They themselves do not revive; but the form that they have given to the inner man presents itself to the eye as the panorama of our being. This is what I am, not what I was. I must accuse myself and testify against myself; and shall I dare to hope? And yet, Lord Jesus, help me to believe that thou hast covered up all—to believe that where sin has been mighty

grace is still more mighty! I do not let thee go; I am lost, and yet in thy hands! I have nothing but thy compassion; nothing to cast into the scale but that I take refuge in thee and flee to free grace! I will even believe, and then I shall have help to keep the faith and to confess. I know that my Redeemer lives, and to him into whose hands I commend my soul I commit also all that are mine, and even those against whom I have sinned, that he, through so much the richer grace, may indemnify them for the harm I have done their souls. That will be a blessed death, because it is a believing death. For one so dying, even the abatement of sensations, of the presentiments of death felt in the body, serve to make faith easier. And as the believer at the close of every day's work goes to sleep with a praying heart, and his going to sleep, not outwardly indeed, and in appearance, yet inwardly, is different from that of others, so is it also when he finally falls asleep. Outwardly he may not differ from others, but inwardly he does. His last dream is not some blissful but vanishing illusion,

but a dream that emerges in a waking, of which it may be said, when the Lord shall redeem the captives of Zion, then shall we be like them that dream. It may truly be said that no one knows better or feels more keenly what death and dying mean than a believing child of God; because to him death and dying are things most unnatural. Only the mouth of a believer could sing us the song: In the midst of life we are still by death surrounded. Whither shall we look for one, help and grace providing? In the midst of death we feel the jaws of hell assail us. Who will bring to such distress release and liberty? To the midst of hell and pains our sins drive us away. What then shall our refuge be, where our souls may stay? Alone in thee, O Christ. Thy dear blood was spilt to take away our guilt! Holy Lord God, holy mighty God, holy merciful God, thou eternal God, suffer us not to fall from the comfort of true faith. Kyrie eleison!

Since, however, the Holy Spirit of God and of our Saviour cannot remind one where there is nothing to be found that

may be remembered, one must learn dying while the body is sound and the faculties awake. One must impress on his mind the word of God that should do one good in death, and in the vigor of youth and manhood learn by heart the dying songs that he would like to pray when words fail him, and when he is too weak and wretched to search for them.

HOW ARE THE SOULS OF BELIEVERS AT DEATH MADE PERFECT IN HOLINESS?

But how is it with sin, that clings to us here below to the last moment, and makes us so sluggish in running the race set before us? Is it thereby done away, in that the body is given to death? or because at the reappearing of the Lord the body is changed? And if one does not live to see the day of the Lord, has he only to die in order to become free from sin? Does it make no difference "how far one has got on in sanctification," or how long and how truly one has lived in faith? Are there not degrees of bliss? Is there to be found beyond the grave only an indistinguishable

likeness of all the blessed? Must one not suppose that there will still be room for a *development* to perfection, to complete sinlessness, to perfect ripeness of the image of God?

As for degrees of bliss, the Scripture nowhere says anything about them. And if it did, one would unqualifiedly say with the psalmist, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." This saying, however, relates to this side of the grave and not the other. Blessedness is complete satiety, peace, and joy in the experience of the grace and favor of God, an enjoyment of the unspeakable love of God. Degrees of blessedness can hardly be conceived of where God *fills* the hungry with good things. Those that hunger most must be those who most feel the need of grace; and in respect to neediness, and the measure of craving, no one of those above will be behind the others. It may be urged, however, that there must be greater susceptibility in such as have long held out faithfully here below, and pursued sanctifi-

cation, and thus have become inwardly riper for the blessed eternity. But leaving out of view what is often falsely understood as sanctification, this objection is not tenable because of another consideration. For how alone is the last remnant of sin blotted out? We know that even here below. It is by beholding God. All overcoming comes about here below by the upward looking of faith. The more I hold the grace and glory of my God fixedly and clearly in view, the more unreservedly I let God's light shine into my heart, the freer I become. Yet not I effect that, but God's blessed, redeeming grace shines into the heart of him who, instead of shrinking back, prostrates himself before God in repentance and prayer. God helps such to believe, and that is the constantly recurring experience of faith, as it is said, "God cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 9). By the faith that God works the heart is not merely cleansed from the guilt and burden of sin, but also from the pleasure in sin. And when at length he permits us to behold him, then it would be simply

apostasy were sin again to *find* a lodging in us; as for its *dwelling* there then, such a thing is not to be mentioned. The joy of the Lord, that here below even is the power and strength of his believing ones, will be all and everything to us above. In this fire sin is consumed, when we see the eye of God turned on us with a brightness and fulness of love that we could never have anticipated. Not that we behold God, but that he beholds us; that melts sin away. It is he himself that refines the gold. What God requires that he also gives; this truth has then and there above its most blessed fulfilment. Therefore it is such a blessed saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Therefore, whoever is so oppressed by daily experience of sin that, spite of his fleeing to grace, he can hardly think it possible for him to be blessed, may still venture to rejoice. The burden that he finds the hardest to bear will there be removed, and "it will be given to him to array himself in pure white silk [linen]; for the silk is the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. xix. 8).

The garments of all the saints are washed in the blood of the Lamb; nothing else takes away out of our hearts even the last remnant of sinful desire but the grace in the Lamb's blood.

ARE THERE DEGREES OF BLESSEDNESS?

There is no denying, indeed, that many of us, alas how many! will become blessed only as brands saved from the fire. And how many look back on a life of faith that bears little trace of being such a life! The hand of the Lord has held them up from utterly falling. But their lives have been spent without fruit, for they lacked fidelity in faith and prayer. The first love did not long hold out, and on the approach of death they need to seek again an almost forfeited grace. How is it in such a case? Does that then make no difference in the blessedness? Will not such an one be inferior to others? will he not need in eternity to begin over again, as it were, to make up for the neglect here below?

Notwithstanding—we hold to it—there are no degrees of blessedness; not even for

those who have only so just come to rights as not to have become believing in vain. For he that is graciously pardoned is wholly pardoned. It does not conflict with this that the apostle speaks of some building on the one foundation Jesus Christ, wood, hay, stubble; and others gold, silver, costly stones (1 Cor. iii. 11–15). Blessedness depends on the foundation on which one has built.

But the place one occupies in the whole church above is another thing. Even here below we are members of one body, and every member is to contribute help to the others according to its measure. No one has his faith and his state of grace only for himself, but also for the good of others. This puts faith to the test where it must show what it is. The outward organization of the church of God on earth, official and non-official, does not coincide with the inward organization. Thus a person may be in a position for doing a specially blessed service for others, and yet his performance not correspond to his gifts and task; for the fidelity belonging to the life of faith has

flagged. Under these circumstances, then, the real organization of the body of Christ is developed that will present itself in the perfected church. All will be blessed that have come to the church above; but the places they occupy will be different. To be with God in grace, that makes blessed; being a blessing to men, that determines the relative place in the whole church. The measure of the future glory of each individual member depends on the fruit and blessing effected here below. Therefore there will be distinctions, or, if the expression is preferred, degrees in the congregation of the blessed. But such distinction does not prejudice the blessedness; for each one in his place is humbly happy, and perfectly happy and satisfied by the grace accorded to him.

WHAT NOW OF UNBELIEVERS BEYOND THE GRAVE?

But the others who here below did not believe, and have not already here below begun the eternal life, still find their place in the realm of death. There, too, are such

as have been unable to enter into the communion of the redemption. "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" (Rom. x. 14). For until the last judgment can be reached *the forecourt of the lost* is still not closed. Many even now still continue death in Hades, while the others in heaven enjoy, unrestricted and unhindered, the eternal life begun on earth. We dare not, however, surrender ourselves to the thought that the future resurrection may bring about the universal redemption, and that instead of leaving the existing separation beyond the grave to continue, or intensifying it, it will completely abolish it. As we have said before, the resurrection will be universal, that is to say, all will have part in it, for Christ made his redeeming sacrifice for all. But for those who have remained in sin spite of the redemption, this resurrection will not be the commencement of a free blessed life. They receive from the redemption what properly appertains to them. Having risen they will give a look at the glory they despised, and then they must go back unto death. It is a

new judgment on new sin. As we must all suffer under the consequences of the old, universal sin, but have a redemption from these consequences, so these must suffer anew under the new sin of rejecting Christ and his redemption. And as this new sin fundamentally is nothing more than the old sin consciously and voluntarily loved and held to, so also the judgment joins on to the previous judgment. Risen to life, yet, because the conditions of life are wanting, *they must return to death in a new and this time an eternal continuance of death.* This is the *second death* or the *other death*, of which it is said, Death and the realm of death, and all that were therein, whose names were not written in the book of life, were cast into the fiery pool, that is the other death (Rev. xx. 14; ii. 11). They are ruined. The Scripture tells us nothing about an annihilation. We cannot say anything else than that this fate, in view of the provisions made by God's patient and untiring love for our unmerited redemption, is only the expression of perfect and holy justice, and *at sight of himself no one*

that shudders at it will be able to complain of injustice on the part of God.

DO THE TORMENTS OF THE LOST DISTURB THE BLISS OF THE REDEEMED?

In view of others, however, pain and dread might seize us at this thought. It might be asked whether the smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever, as the Scripture describes it, will not disturb the blessedness of the redeemed. Three things may be said in reply. In the first place, in the communion of love with the triune God all other love will be swallowed up, and in that and in eternal life every loss will be richly indemnified; so that, at least, deprivation of loved ones is not to be mentioned (Matt. xix. 29). And then, moreover, if, spite of the pains of his love (Jer. xxxi. 20), the bliss of God is not disturbed by the sufferings of his creatures that they have incurred by their own guilt, neither will the blessedness of the redeemed. For they cannot cherish greater love for the lost than God himself. But lastly, the contrast between the lost and the redeem-

ed does not consist merely in the different situations in which both are found, but also in a contrast of willing and being. On both sides reigns a tremendous union of freedom and of necessity. The lamentations of the lost are not lamentations of repentance, but lamentations of enchained hatred.

WILL THERE BE A RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS?

What lies beyond this we may resignedly leave to the unfathomable love of God, knowing as we do that it is infinite, and that no sacrifice has been too great, no patience too wearisome for him. It appears a beautiful thought, which some have entertained, and among them one of the most enlightened and thoughtful divines of the Christian Church—John Albrecht Bengel—that there will be a restoration of all things, in which even Satan will return to the footstool of love that created him, and will be blessed, if even as a stool at the feet of love, and as one permitted only to be at the door of the house of God. And whoever makes earnest work of his own blessed-

ness might gladly cherish such thoughts *for others*. But in the archives and doomsday book of holy love we do not find it written. We do, however, find the contrary expressed.

IS CONVERSION AFTER DEATH POSSIBLE?

We have now presented in grand outlines the *intimations* of Scripture concerning "the other side of the grave"—outlines that one dares to fill out only with the most sacred chasteness, if he would escape falling into trivialities and shallow blundering. Having done this, however, we cannot conclude without referring to, and, if possible, answering an inquiry often discussed with earnest and loving interest, viz., the inquiry concerning *the possibility of a conversion after this life.*

For us, indeed, the determination concerning what shall befall us beyond the grave rests wholly with this life, and the other side of the grave discloses to us the results of this side. But there are so many who here below have not had the opportunity of deciding for or against God, because

they do not know him and the provisions and works of his redeeming love. They belong partly to the remote heathen nations; or the influences and tendency of their education, or their position in life, has at best brought them into contact with only the extremest wave-circle of God's word and of Christian spirit and life. Relations that have become historical, the environment into which they were born are largely to be blamed for their estrangement from God. And just those who are living Christians, and who must largely, and perhaps chiefly, connect the birth and unfolding of their inward life with family tradition, or that of the community to which they belong, or of their nationality, dare not ignore the power of relations that have become historical. Perhaps those, as preachers and churches, who have brought the gospel near to such, are themselves to blame, or at least are sharers in the blame of their repugnance to it. And then so many must die before they have opportunity to know the gospel and become aware of the grace of the calling.

Now, in general, it obtains here that every one will be judged according to the measure of what he has received from God, and this Paul expresses in Rom. ii. 12, thus: "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law." He distinguishes here Jews and Gentiles. The heathen have not the law, but they are bound to obey what in their hearts their consciences testify to them concerning God and the worship they owe him, and concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. The transgression of what is peculiar to the scripturally established law is not charged to them. In so far, however, as they have sinned against what they have, and because they have so sinned, they, too, are under condemnation. Just so there are in this respect two ways of being lost. It is this that we must in the first place apply to the total difference of men and their acquaintance or unacquaintance with the truth of God.

But now, in the history of mankind, there has appeared a new revelation of God, des-

tined for all, intimately concerning all, viz., the revelation in his Son, in Christ Jesus, the redemption. No one now can be lost or blessed except as this is determined by his attitude towards Christ and the redemption. Therefore, Peter says (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20; iv. 6), the gospel was preached to the dead also, even to such as believed not in Noah's times, those heroes of unbelief and ungodliness. From this we must infer that in Hades, in the realm of death, there is still a preaching of the gospel, and that not for the purpose of bringing about a final decision opposed to God, and thus the last judicial ground for condemnation, but for the purpose of winning even the dead for the Lord's kingdom of heaven. And not merely is such the purpose, but it has this result, as Peter says: "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." That means, their earthly life is of course lost, and the consequences of this loss (so we must even conceive) they will have to bear at last (at

the resurrection); but in the core of their personality a new life has sprung up that strives towards God and is of account before him and has preservation. This preaching of the gospel in the realm of death was first undertaken by Christ himself — as, in the power of the spirit in which he was made alive, he went to the dead, even to the spirits in prison that in Noah's time believed not, when God's patience set a final respite. We may from this, at the same time, infer an intimation as to how far the preaching in the realm of death extends. Compare the prophecy in Ezek. xvi. 53: "I will bring again the captivity of Sodom."

Therefore it is scriptural, and not contrary to Scripture, to believe in the possibility of conversion in the realm of death, especially since, according to Rev. xx. 11–15, there are such in it whose names are found in the book of life at the future resurrection and judgment. This conversion, however, is not effected by the terrors of Hades (purifying fire, purgatory), for Hades is, properly, no place of preparation for heaven, neither is it an *intermediate place* be-

tween life on earth and heaven. It is essentially *a vestibule of hell;* yet, just because it is this, and only this, there remains the *possibility* of a deliverance out of it. On earth conversion is effected only by the word of the gospel. But perhaps, yea probably, those who come to know Christ and believe on him only when in the realm of death must wait (as the Old Testament saints once needed to wait) for deliverance out of it till the great resurrection and judgment day. So, I believe, I may venture to infer from the intimations about the first and second resurrection (Rev. xx. 1; 1 Cor. xv.). And it may be that in the end it will appear that a great part of those who have died within the ecclesiastical communions are to be found in this condition.

We dare not go farther, and assume that conversion in the realm of death may be easier than in this world. Many a veil and hinderance to conversion that exists in this upper world may then be removed—in history, in social life and intercourse, in toil, in distress for daily bread, in enervation, etc.—and the unobstructed view of the gloomy

region of death and of its dominion may deeply wound the former frivolity, indecision, and sloth. Still we dare not disregard the fact that death itself makes a conclusion in life; and as the soul, when attaining the age of maturity, no longer has the pliability of boyhood, the elasticity of youth, so will this be true in a much greater degree where the result of an entire life, in the fashion of judicial effect, stamps the soul with its own impress. Along with the results of a lost or even a squandered life there goes also an inferior elasticity of spirit; and as on earth the ability to form a moral resolution increases or decreases with one's greater or less moral fidelity, so the ability to make the resolution requisite for repentance and faith will, in the realm of death, be much reduced in every one who has not made earnest use of life in this world as a season of preparation for eternity. But the more thoroughly one has become accustomed to the present life, the more the soul will consume itself by the painful memory of, and fruitless longing for, a lost, an irrevocably lost season, and so much the less will it be

capable of believingly losing itself in the future offered to it by the gospel so rich in grace.

Those, therefore, that busy themselves with the question whether even now the realm of death can again open its gates to suffer its occupants to pass over into a life of bliss, have the most cogent reasons for not pressing the inquiry in their own interest, to postpone repentance. The question may only be proposed and answered in the interest of compassionate love. In that interest, however, the response derived from Scripture is full of comfort. With that we may confidently commend to the great, I would even say the inventive love of God, those who have died giving no sign or testimony that they have died in penitent faith. Perhaps God may employ many a Christian there above, who is mighty as a witness, to continue the preaching of the gospel among the dead.

I will raise only one more question among the many that may still suggest themselves: Are there few that be saved? To this, beside the adjustment the question receives

Luke xiii. 23 sqq., we have two answers in the Scripture. The first sounds dry and serious: "Many are called but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 24). This answer is *for us*. The other sounds hopeful and blessed, and is for those whom we love in God and Christ: "After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. vii. 9).

[The reader will notice, that what the Author says on the subject of the possibility of conversion after death varies from the prevalent belief of the Christian Church regarding the teaching of Scripture. Though the view he presents has been made prominent, of late, by the advocacy of highly esteemed Biblical scholars, the older view still remains in the representative confessions of the Church, and as the prevalent belief. According to that belief, the opportunity of receiving the saving benefit of salvation is confined to the present life, and men shall be acquitted or condemned in the day of judgment "according to the deeds done in the body" (2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. ii. 6–11). To this

catholic belief the Translator adheres. Having expressed to the esteemed Author his scruples on this point, Dr. Cremer has generously replied: "I am perfectly content that you should express your scruples against my conjectures regarding the possibility of a conversion after death; which, indeed, I have given only as conjecture, regarding which I believe that there is motive for it in the analogy of faith and of the Holy Scripture, inasmuch as it does not lie within the scope of the latter to answer questions of the sort that are ever cropping out in connection with Christian thinking. In such cases the answer must be sought in a fraternal exchange of opinions in the fellowship of the Spirit and of faith." It is the Translator's hope that the following observations will be found to reciprocate the sentiment so fraternally expressed.

Every truly Christian mind feels the interest of the inquiry, and agrees, submissively to the will of God, in wishing that it might be answered as by the Author. But even coming to Scripture with this favorable disposition, we are constrained to the same conclusion that the Author has expressed in regard to the kindred notion of a final restoration of all things, viz., "We do not find it recorded in the archives and doomsday-book of holy love, but we do find the contrary expressed." It is proper here to confine our remarks to those passages of Scripture to which the Author refers, as containing intimations of the possibility of conversion after

death. Regarding Rom. ii. 12, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law," even if we admit that here it is expressed that "there are two ways of being lost," it is wholly inadmissible to infer that there may be similarly two ways of being saved. This passage has been commonly taken as the most explicit statement of the fact that the heathen that know not God perish. The tone of the whole passage from which it is taken is to the effect that they are sinners, and condemned, and await a day of wrathful judgment. This idea is maintained in the alternative sentence quoted. Of the heathen without law it is said they "perish." Only of those that have known God's law is the issue expressed in ambiguous phrase, leaving undetermined whether they perish or not; they "are judged."

Regarding 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, it is well known that very many deny that it expresses that Christ preached to spirits as they were in Hades; and one may deny this uninfluenced by the position he holds on the subject before us. Yet even admitting our Author's interpretation of what it expresses, it does not admit of the inference he would make. That *Christ* preached to the dead is no ground for inferring that any other person would be sent to do the same. That he preached to those of a certain age of the world's history does not admit of the inference that he did so to others; on

the contrary, the exclusive mention of those precludes such inference. Moreover, the mention of those "heroes of unbelief and wickedness," as the Author calls them, the men of Noah's day, and of Christ preaching to them in Hades, if it affords an inference at all, such as the Author would make, would lead us to suppose that the gospel must be preached after death even to those who in this life have openly resisted God's call to repentance and offer of mercy, as those antediluvians did. But this notion the Author expressly repudiates. He is looking only for hope for such as have had no knowledge of God or offer of grace in this life. In fact, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, as the Author, with others, interprets it, offers no grounds for inference of any kind, but stands an isolated statement, without contextual relationship of thought, and without a parallel or kindred expression anywhere else in Scripture. It is in this respect like Melchizedek, and needs an inspired interpreter to set forth its import, if the interpretation in question be correct.

It is supposed, indeed, by many with our Author that 1 Pet. iv. 6 is not only a parallel passage to 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, as they interpret the latter, but actually a reiteration in clearer terms, that to those already dead the gospel was preached; and they find, moreover, in it authority for believing that none are to be finally judged without having before received the offer of salvation through Christ.

The passage reads, "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." This is a universal statement, yet, as the "for this cause" shows, it is adduced in corroboration of what is stated in the foregoing verse, viz., that blasphemers of Christians as such, and so of Christ, shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. That judgment is near: "the end of all things is at hand" (ver. 7). Blasphemers that are dead shall not escape it; for the Judge will call before him the living and the dead. And the gospel shall be their condemnation; for it was preached to them in the Christians they blasphemed and the good lives they reviled. It was preached to them to this effect, as it is to all that hear it, viz., that though the judgment of fleshly death should fall on them, as is the lot of man, yet they might live in the spirit according to God. Rejecting what was preached, and so dying, it is manifest what such must expect in the final judgment. And this is said for the re-assurance of believers who may be tempted to live as the heathen, and, like the heathen, to "think it strange" that they do not. Such is a natural and contextual interpretation of ver. 6; whereas the view that makes it a statement of the general fact that the gospel was preached to those already dead, makes of it a statement that has no connection with anything in the context, and thus,

again, like the similar interpretation of 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

As for Rev. xx. 11–15, it is expressly said that the judgment shall be "according to their works," which means the works done in life and not after death. And it is obvious that those who were "not found written in the book of life" were so not found according to those works. And seeing that the passage presents the host as gathering to the judgment from various regions, Hades being one, it is just as legitimate to infer that the latter produced only such as were not found written in the book of life, as to infer, with our Author, that some were and some were not. It is better, however, to infer from such apocalyptic representations no doctrine that is not established by clear statements of other parts of revelation.

The Author wisely limits the effect of what he represents concerning the possibility of conversion after death; limits it so much as to make it rash in the last degree for one to calculate on it for himself. Even for others, for whose benefit it is conjectured, the prospect admits of so feeble a hope, that imagination must have recourse to "the inventive love of God," and commend them to that. Meanwhile, however, revelation gives no intimation that the offer of salvation to those already in the realm of death is the invention of the love of God.—*Tr.*]

THE DEATH OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

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DEATH OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

"Ach, es ist ein bittres Leiden,
Und ein rechter Myrrhentrank,
Sich von seinen Kindern scheiden
Durch den schweren Todesgang.
Da geschieht ein Herzensbrechen,
Das kein Mund recht kann aussprechen."

"Ah! it causes bitter smarting,
And a draught of myrrh we drink,
When from little children parting
At the grave's relentless brink.
Hearts are breaking then with grief
Which in words finds no relief."

Do not Paul Gerhardt's words find an echo in our hearts? Can you describe to man what you have gone through beside the little bed of your poor dying child? Even the old Greek Herodotus regarded it as a much sadder thing when children were buried by their parents, than when parents

were buried by their children. True, it is appointed unto men once to die, and death is *suffering* that we all must bear, even if we have no right to complain of it. But since the revelation of the patience of God there in Paradise, man should not die *instantly*, not right away or soon after his birth. Even in the Scripture it is regarded as an *excess* of the dominion of death, if I may so speak, at least as something more unnatural than death in general, that "children are there who do not attain their days, or old men that do not fulfil their years" (Isa. lxv. 20; comp. Ps. cii. 24–28). Old and satisfied with life, like the patriarchs, so at least it might and ought to be, if once one must die. In *time* man can receive in faith the seed of eternal life that God's grace sows, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Yet are not, perhaps, the half of mankind borne to the grave before they know what it means to live? How should parents understand it? what should they say? what should console them when their little infants precede them? Still, that admits of the answer: that they should give them up

and become used to suffering. But why are the children born? and what becomes of them, seeing they were not able to "lay hold on eternal life?" (1 Tim. vi. 12). And what profit have the infants themselves of being born, beside pains they could not tell of, and loving care that they could not understand?

Thank God! His word gives the answer.

First of all this is fixed, that no man comes into the world for whom the Saviour did not come and die and rise again; no man who is not destined according to God's eternal counsel to participate in his blessed kingdom. So has it been from the beginning. There had not another man been born after the fall of Adam, were it not to be with reference to the promised Saviour. Were it not so, Adam and Eve would not have remained in this life. *There has never been a man in the world who did not first of all owe his birth to the Saviour*, to whatever beside he might owe it. "That was the true light which lighteth every man" (John i. 9).

Thus it is involved in the very fact of

our birth that we should be called to the kingdom of God and his glory. One may say that birth is the beginning of the calling, and it concerns us who live to make our calling and election sure, and have ourselves founded and established (2 Pet. i. 10, 11; 1 Cor. i. 8, etc.).

But to the children who do and can know nothing of this we apply the sad and yet so consoling saying of Paul, as we apply it also to so many others, "Death reigned even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression" (Rom. v. 14). Death has become a power in the world to which others become a sacrifice beside those that have themselves incurred that penalty. And this is true especially in the case of infants who live and die without any will of their own, before they know and understand how and wherefore they should live. Therefore death is especially an enemy to them. Should it be able to hinder them from becoming blessed, from inheriting eternal life, these who have not "judged themselves unworthy of eternal life?" (Acts xiii. 46). By no means!

The dominion of him who has the power of death, *i. e.*, the devil, is broken (Heb. ii. 14). For those who have experienced, or recognize that death is their enemy, there stands the written word, "The last enemy that is abolished is death" (1 Cor. xv. 26). Now so many must suffer under the ruin that has come into the world through sin, and yet who know not why they were born. Many an infant is born only to die again right away. In the resurrection of the dead all will become clear. There, whoever is here born to suffering can find rich compensation. There it will appear that our children who died early were not born in vain; that they, too, were born for the glorious liberty of the children of God.

What the apostle says of the time when sin was dead in him, and of the time when sin revived, and he thereby died, *i. e.*, he fell under condemnation as it proclaims itself in death and as it shapes the whole life before death (Rom. vii. 8–10), that deserves attention. There is a difference between death and death. For him in whom sin has not revived in that decided manner as

sin, as opposition to the law of God, death is not what it is for others, the beginning of doom and of the end. This, of course, is only for the sake of Christ, to whom our children like ourselves are indebted for life, and on this account for what of itself accrues to men from the redemption. The apostle recognizes a "bringing forth fruit unto death" (Rom. vi. 21; vii. 5); and this in the natural man is correspondingly the same as the "attaining unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 11) in the regenerated man. From all this may we not, must we not, indeed, make the inference—the more one has suffered under the disturbed and perverted arrangement of the world occasioned by sin, without any special concurrence in himself, the more richly will the Lord indemnify him? To this let us add that, according to 1 Cor. vii. 14, the children of a believing father, or of a believing mother, from the very fact that they are such, have part in the communion of God; and that obtains here on earth. But if that is true for this world and for living children, how much more may it be true of

dead children, that for Christ's sake the kingdom of heaven is opened to them! I say simply this: *If the dying children do not become blessed, then we should not baptize the living children.*

Let it not be said, however, if, then, the children become blessed, why do not all men die as children? In the first place, we must not *die* in order to be blessed, but *live*. Only death should not hinder us from becoming blessed; it should not separate us from it (Rom. viii. 35 sqq.; 1 Cor. iii. 22 sq.). And then we should not be influenced in our feelings by the thought that our children are in good keeping, but should proceed from and hold fast to this, that they have suffered so early under the consequences of sin and without like transgression, whereas we are still spared.

Accordingly, thy child is in good keeping to the great day of redemption, as are all the children of God gone home to glory. Thy child *is blessed*, O troubled woman, *and awaits a blessed resurrection. It is not*, indeed, *an angel.* No man becomes an angel when he dies. But it is in the fellow-

ship of the angels (Heb. xii. 22; Luke xvi. 22; Heb. i. 14). We shall all become more than the angels; we become the first-fruits of the creatures of God (James i. 18); and in respect to nature we shall be *as* the angels (Mark xii. 25; Luke xx. 36); so that Paul Gerhardt is right—

"Aber das, was wir beweinen,
Weiss hiervon ganz lauter nichts,
Sondern sieht die Sonne scheinen
Und den Glanz des ew'gen Lichts,
Singt und springt und hört die Scharen,
Die hier seine Wächter waren."

"But the child of our repining
Knows naught of our woful plight,
But beholds the sunlight shining,
Splendor of eternal light,
Sings and springs and hears the choir
That below his guardians were."

But now one thing more: Do the children remain children? Certainly not! Even on earth it is misery when a child remains a child. That cannot be in the kingdom of heaven. But all children of God must eternally be *as the children* (Mark x. 14). And yet the child will not lose its youth; for

heaven and eternity are the country and the season of eternal youth (2 Cor. iv. 16; Ps. xcii. 14; Rev. xxii. 1, 2). I also believe I may infer from many intimations of Scripture that it will be visible what one has especially been on earth, or what has befallen him especially (*e. g.*, Rev. v. 6; vi. 11; Dan. xii. 3). What a joy to find our children again, grown up and flourishing in the fulness of eternal youth, as the roses whose dew the Lord himself is! (Hos. xiv. 5.)

Therefore, whoever, with breaking heart, stands by the sick and dying bed of a dear child, let him in faith bless it for its final passage, and surrender it into the hands of the Saviour, even if the lips refuse the words. Angels will bear it company. We may, and even must, in many respects *believe for others.* The Saviour does not receive only living children, nor only well-behaved children. There may have been among those mentioned, Mark x. 13, many a child that, spite of its tender age, gave its mother trouble enough; many a mother may have brought her naughty child to the Saviour with a specially longing heart on

that account, that he might bless it. His love will more mightily win the heart of the child, and knows better how to woo it faithfully than the most faithful parental love would have been able to do.

"Wandelt eure Klag in Singen,
Ist doch nunmehr alles gut.
Trauern mag nicht wiederbringen
Was im Himmelsschosse ruht.
Aber wer getrost sich giebet,
Ist bei Gott sehr hoch geliebet."

"Change your weeping into singing,
All will now be for the best.
Mourning never can be bringing
Children back from heavenly rest.
They who boldly self resign
Are received to love divine."

CONCERNING SPIRITUALISM.

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SPIRITUALISM [German: *spiritism*] is one of the most repugnant manifestations in the sphere of spiritual and religious life, and one of the most lying distortions of the truth. What it pretends to offer, the Christian, in the first place, has no need of, and, in the second, cannot attempt to make use of without imperilling his faith and salvation. The way in which something is ostensibly offered to him would be for him, under all circumstances, a way to deep and grievous backsliding, even to apostasy, were he only to take even one step in it. Under such circumstances it is quite unimportant whether the performances of Spiritualism are real, or only pretence and lies. *They are, however, the latter.*

What Spiritualism proposes to offer is the proof of the existence of a world of spirits,

and the possibility of intercourse with it. The proof is to the Christian superfluous. For it does not even demand the Christian consciousness, as determined by faith, but only that fear of God that is universal, in order to know that death does not end all, but that, on the contrary, there is for us all an existence beyond the grave and a realm of the dead, a world of departed spirits. On this subject the Christian, by reason of his faith in the Saviour, knows even something more, that no one knows or can know without this faith. And still further he knows that there is a world of spirits, whose members are not derived from the world of men, but are angels of God, who are sent forth to a service on account of them that are to inherit salvation; and bad angels—angels that have sinned, whose captain is the devil, who abides not in truth. The Scripture-believing Christian has not only no ground for doubting this, but every reason for believing it in connection with what he knows on the testimony of God concerning his Saviour and salvation.

But he must unqualifiedly and from first

to last repel every solicitation to assure himself by experiments of the existence of that world of spirits, and so he must aprioriorally characterize the results of such experiments as lies, if not as something still worse. He cannot for a moment put himself on the footing of negotiation and investigation with Spiritualism, but can only brand it as a lie oppugnant to God, as deception and self-deception of unbelief, and deplore the fact when earnest spirits, perhaps in the interest of science or forsooth of faith, have dealings with it. Science has as little as faith to expect from that quarter by way of promoting its interests. And those who would appreciate Spiritualism, as they suppose, in the interest of apologetics, more than increase the dangers of apologetics, that are already great enough. Such attempts are in roughest contrast with the Saviour's course of conduct, who would and could make no use of the testimony of evil spirits to him and his cause.

Intercourse on our part with the dead, and intercourse of the dead with us, is impossible. To attempt such intercourse,

however, is wicked; for it is not merely aimless, but also a hinderance of the faith that God the Lord requires in respect to his word and his Holy Spirit. If unbelief is resisting the Holy Spirit, it does not cease to be that when one would believe the spirits.

This intercourse with spirits is impossible, because death separates from the life on this side of the grave. The dead in the realm of death have no more power over themselves, but are held and bound by the consequences of death, whose essence is complete impotence of life. If death is the natural and judicial consequence of sin, are these consequences manifest in it, then it is not to be thought of that the dead in Hades can still hold intercourse with the hither world that they have left, though they might very much wish to do so. A devouring longing for what they have left behind may so much the more fill them, the less they have become inwardly allied to, or may ally themselves to, the blessed existence in the communion of God. But that is just their misery, that past and fut-

ure are sunk out of sight in the unblessed present of death and Hades. Wishes, desires, cravings are not extinct, for the soul and they are united. No guilt is gone; yet they themselves can never expiate it, and have no expiation. Gladly would they set many a thing to rights, make up for neglect, make amends for faults, like the rich man, but — and that is just the misery of the doom that has begun in them—it is now too late. In thousands of cases the belief in ghosts may be the expression of sympathy in this dreadful misery of those who can never come back, not even for a moment, to the places of their guilt that they have left. They *ought*, indeed, now to be bound.

Thus there is no possibility of establishing on our side any intercourse with the dead in the realm of death, or of producing an apparition of those deceased. The realm of death opens only to receive the deceased, not the living; and those who are there are chained and bound by the sentence of God, and the hour is yet to come when also the realm of death must give up its

dead, that the final judgment may take place. Those, however, who may perhaps be preserved there unto life await the hour of their divine deliverance. Neither they themselves nor others can even for a moment open to them the world on this side the grave. Our contact with the realm of death consists in the presentiment of death and judgment; and of that another part of the belief in ghosts may be the expression.

With regard, however, to the blessed who are in heaven, the question whether they may come back, even for brief moments, falls to the ground of itself; and that *we* can at least constrain *them* to do so is totally out of the question. What they might, perhaps, be able or wish to do to those whom they have left behind, for that God's angels are better ministers and messengers; and they are not their messengers but God's, whose providential care for us here below cannot be excelled by the love of those who have gone before us.

Therefore we are able to explain how it is that Spiritualism, like all other belief in ghosts, shows a partiality for spirits un-

blessed, which, however, even the rich man in the parable did not regard as proper to give instruction. Jugglery and lies have all along been its instruments and performances, except when God turned the frivolous play into earnest, as in the case of the witch of Endor. But then this happens for a judgment on him that has become as depraved as Saul. And woe to him who invokes God's judgment on himself!

There is something of yet graver import to be said concerning this pretended intercourse with the higher world of spirits. The Christian knows how it is with the angels of God and their destination. It is not the Christian but God who has power over them; and they are not at the disposal of the Christian's will, but God sends them for the service of his own. But least of all can a Christian, without detriment to his faith and salvation, propose to claim their service with a view to awaking, preserving, and promoting his faith, in contradiction of Heb. ii. 2 sq.; Gal. iii. 19 sqq. For the time is gone by for that ministry of the angels that they had to perform to

God under the old dispensation (Heb. viii. 13). And to seek their ministry as a mediation of faith is nothing but unbelief in the mediatorship of Christ and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and is the way to apostasy (Col. ii. 18 sq.). The very attempt to influence the angels is a moral and religious impossibility for the Christian while he abides in faith; not to mention that such an attempt is a physical impossibility, owing to the articulated order of the whole creation. It must in every respect turn out an attempt at intercourse with the world of *evil spirits*.

But even this intercourse is not in the power of man. The hour will indeed come, when the lost will open their eyes on the company in which they are at present found. Till then, however, while they live in this body, no man can apprehend by his senses, not even by that of touch and feeling, the extra-mundane world and its being. For this it is necessary that one should be lifted above the limitations of the perceptive faculty by what the Holy Scripture calls ecstasy, seeing visions, etc. But man is not

able to effect this of himself. It comes about like all those miraculous transactions that sacred history presents, and which belong to the great problems of the history of salvation that came to pass between God and mankind, and whose season is past, now that the redemption is made and the Holy Spirit is present until the end comes (Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9).

It is as much out of man's power to influence the evil world of spirits as to influence the dead and angels. And the information concerning pretended facts of the kind has in all ages the same appearance. For one acquainted with the history of superstition, the proceedings in spiritualistic circles have a desperate likeness to what is contained in judicial records of the period of trials for witchcraft. But the whole substance of witchcraft is demonstrably nothing else than a toughly enduring remnant of the heathenism of our ancestors. A look into Grimm's and Simrock's "German Mythology" affords the fullest solution of this subject. And whoever has *understandingly* read Jung Stilling's "Theory

of the Science of Spirits" finds, in all reported manifestations of spirits, the reproduction of the forms of the old myths of gods and heroes, only become devoid of marrow and mettle by reason of age. Not even the blow of the hand, and the impression of the hand with the fingers in the form of a brand, is wanting, nor the breathing on one, etc. In this respect Spiritualism is nothing but a new edition of this old superstition, or rather heathenism, in modern and genteel dress. Every physician and spiritual adviser of the insane of a lunatic asylum knows of these supposed observations of facts. They are hallucinations that no healthy person experiences, but which can only be recognized as such by one who has learned to know when a person is really insane—a task which, as is well known, is not always easy, and which even Blumhardt was not always equal to in his earlier days.

On the other hand, a Christian will be far from denying that the evil world of spirits may extend its influence into the world this side of the grave, and that they may produce effects on men. But what advantage

to Spiritualism is there in this? Were there anywhere something of the sort as actual fact, we would have to recognize in the so-called mediums that grievous form of sickness that we find as demoniacal possession in the days when the Lord walked on earth, and with which a Christian man could not meddle in any way but to heal it, according to the direction of the Lord (Matt. xvii. 21).

And shall a Christian man, spite of Mark i. 34, make any account of such manifestations in any sort of apologetic interest? The sole apology would be the rebuke: "Be silent and hold thy peace," of Mark i. 25; and whoever is not in condition to do that has every reason to withhold his hand, and were it only his pen, from things that could ruin him. But that there is still at present, or that there is again at present, such power permitted to evil spirits as once appeared in the form of demoniacal possession, must be doubted on the ground of Matt. viii. 29; Mark i. 24 sq.; Luke x. 18; John xii. 31; xvi. 11. In the so-called mediums we can see nothing else than persons who are physically and morally depraved,

ruined by debauchery, avarice, pride, or unbelief, so that they no longer have the mastery of themselves. They are persons who, having no longer a will of their own, are under the condemnation of their sin and their disease, and are on the surest road to utter ruin in body and soul.

If there are Christian people that meddle with these manifestations in any other spirit than that of a self-contained seriousness that censures and renounces them, of compassionate love and godly faith; if they entertain even an atom of faith in the reality of what, under the most favorable view of it, is lying and jugglery, and thus is just as satanic as if it were the immediate effect of the devil and his angels, let them lay to heart the warning against having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. v. 11). The danger that even the elect may be deceived (Matt. xxiv. 24) and seduced into error exists also at the present day.

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